No. 258 / AUGUST 1994

THE NI
NEW INTERNATIONALIST

Beirut

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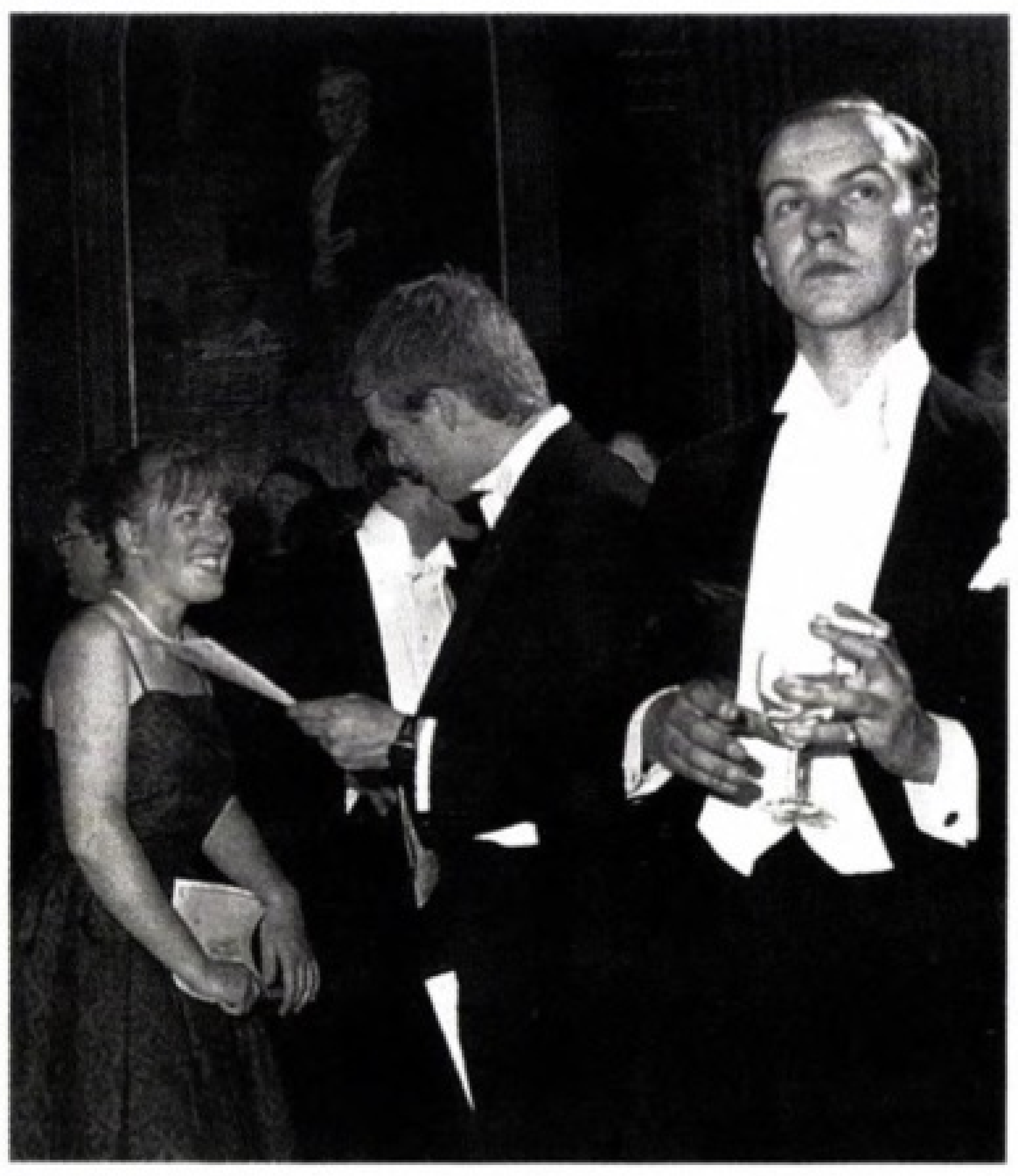

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NI

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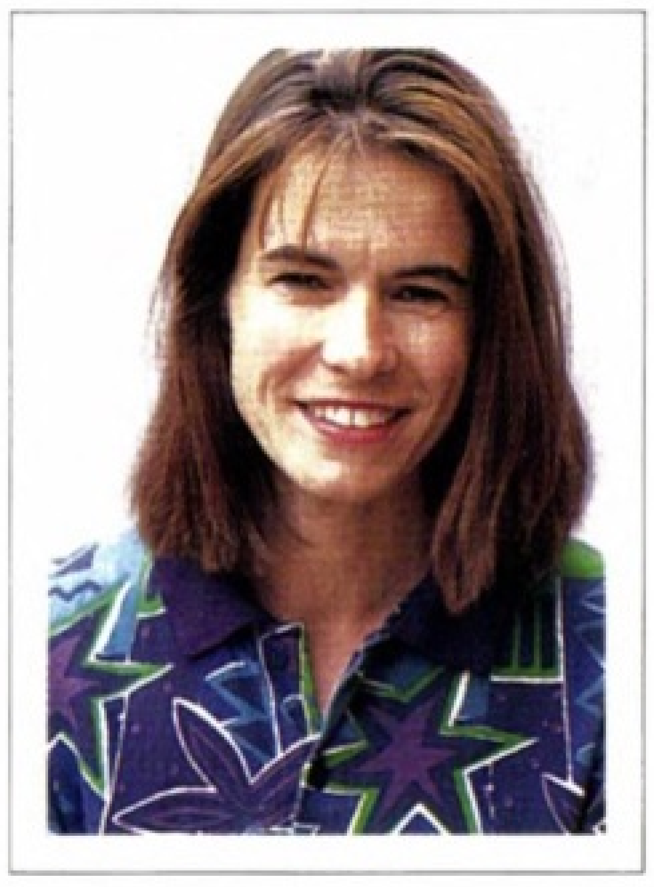
FRONT COVER PHOTO OF MARTYRS' SQUARE, BEIRUT: BY **CHRIS STOWERS/PANOS**
MAGAZINE DESIGNED BY **CLAIRE PALMER**

THIS MONTH'S **THEME**

Beirut

FROM THIS MONTH'S **EDITOR**

THIS magazine has been ten years in the making. Normally they take four months, so it has been cooking for rather longer than usual. I lived in Lebanon during the war, ten years ago, and I wanted to get across what Beirut meant to me and what people had been through during 17 years of war. What it felt like to have a bullet ricochet off your house, to have to drive at night with no headlights in case you were spotted and shot at; to feel yourself heaving a sigh of relief when the flat next door was bombed instead of yours. But also what it is like now that the war is over: the magic of being able to drive to places that you have never seen before even though they are only a few hundred yards away, the immense relief at walking the streets without fear, and sadly, people's gradual disillusionment as high hopes of peace turn to disappointment.



Returning again this year it was the little things that were so irritating. For example, getting in touch with people for personal or professional reasons is a nightmare. The phones still only work randomly, so making appointments to see potential writers is a tricky business. First, try and ring from the hotel. Then give up, take an (expensive) taxi through town – on one occasion getting lost on the way because the taxi-driver had, like me, not crossed the 'Green Line' dividing Beirut before and didn't know his way around the East side of the city – find the office, climb the stairs, ask in halting Arabic for the right person, leave a note because they are out saying that you will be back at 3 pm in the hope that they will be there (because no-one knows where they are), get back in taxi, drive back to the hotel, try phoning a few other people, no luck, go back to the first person by taxi at 3 pm, find no-one in, leave another note... It is amazing that this magazine ever happened!

My determination that it should probably has its roots in an incident in 1985 that I cannot forget. A ceasefire had been announced in Sidon after several weeks of siege. We had to get to Beirut urgently and decided to risk the drive even though we weren't sure that the snipers on the hills above the sea had decided to stop shooting. Grim-faced and white-knuckled, I was sure that this time we would get it wrong. I felt sick. Looking at me, my Lebanese friend laughed. 'Don't worry, you'll be telling this story back in England.' She was right. We got to Beirut, and here I am, writing about it ten years later. She is still there, struggling with the difficulties of life after war.

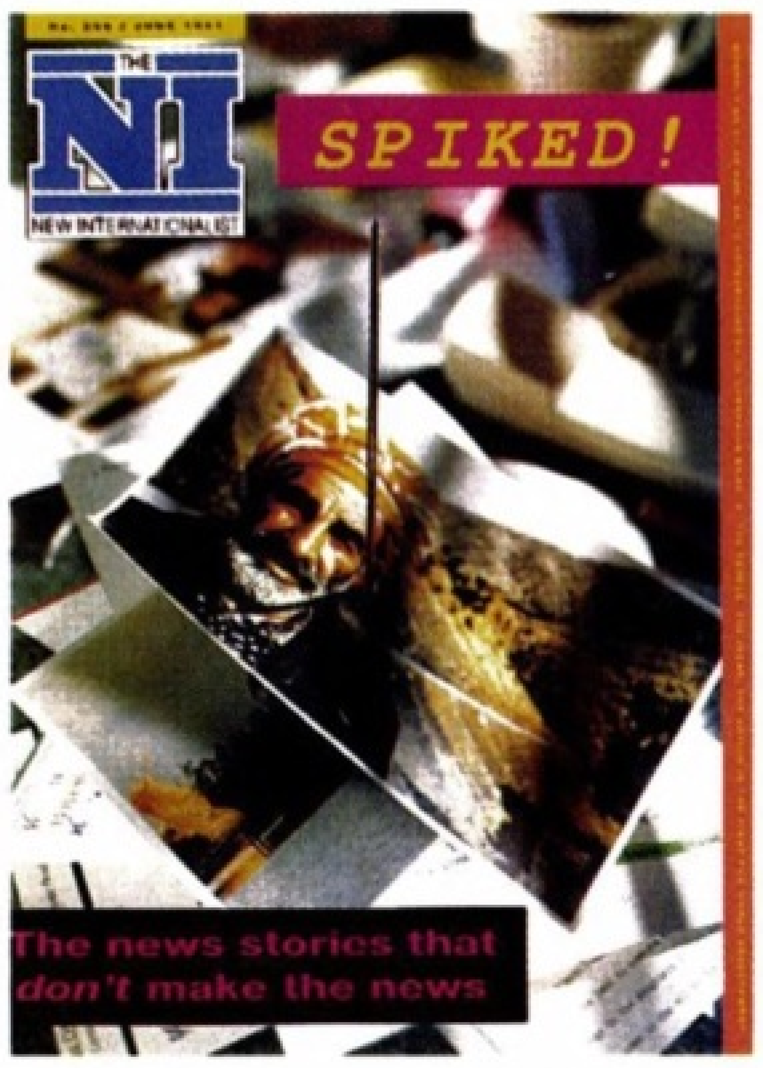
Nikki van der Gaag

Nikki van der Gaag
*for the **New Internationalist** Co-operative*

The **New Internationalist** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address is inside the front cover.

No human interest

Sarah Stewart's article 'No Pablo, no story' in your issue on the *Media* (**NI 256**) highlights the fact that despite the technology of the super-information highway, the view of world events through the mainstream media remains unable to focus on human-rights atrocities.



Natural disasters are of course a different matter. An earthquake that kills 70 Colombians and leaves hundreds missing in subsequent landslides is deemed – quite rightly – a 'human interest' story and therefore newsworthy. But the 20,000 Colombians killed or 'disappeared' since 1986 are ignored. Their story is spiked!

As long as the international media continue to see human rights as outside their remit, international governments will continue exploiting economic opportunities in countries with repressive governments. These governments will in turn continue to disregard human rights.

Jim Caunter
London, UK

Landmines action

I was very pleased to see the piece 'Deadly Legacy' on landmines in *Updates* (**NI 256**). CAFOD, the Catholic Relief and Development agency, would like to see a worldwide ban on the production, stockpiling, trade and use of anti-personnel landmines.

A UN Review Conference will take place in September 1995 but it appears that it will only be concerned with steps to govern the *use* of landmines, not their eradication. The existing Landmines Protocol is a complete failure and has been routinely ignored by both governments and rebel armies. Landmines do not discriminate between the foot of a solider and the foot of a child. If even a small percentage of the landmines laid in a field fail to self-destruct, that field cannot be used safely.

The group of non-governmental organizations which forms the International Campaign to ban Landmines recently renewed their call for a total ban. **NI** readers interested in becoming involved in the CAFOD landmines action can contact me.

Linda R Jones
CAFOD, Romero Close,
Stockwell Road, London SW9 9TY
Tel: 071-733-7900

VIV QUILLIN

Base calumnies

The week your *Northern Ireland* issue (**NI 255**) dropped through my letterbox, paramilitaries murdered nine people in Ulster. Such base calumnies did not merit much mention in your magazine, where the villains of the 'Irish question' were clearly the British army and the British Government.

Neither of these are responsible for such despicable acts as the Enniskillen and Shankill Road bombings or the killing of two children in Warrington.

However, I am sure that your issue will be avidly read as it circulates around the Irish bars of Boston and Chicago together with the Noraid collection tins.

David Pearce
Kent, England

True nature

I was impressed by the openness in your issue on *Northern Ireland* (**NI 255**). I think Chris Brazier's keynote was the first time I found a British person coming to grips with their true nature. His point on the British tendency to divide 'people who we do not see as "one of us" into "tribes",' is the legacy of Britain's colonial history. I was particularly glad because he did not display the British supremacy that many people still seem to feel today about the British past.

The colonial background of this division into 'tribes' is equally true in Africa. A close look at many African countries where there is strife shows that the British were either the first or the last colonial masters before independence. They divided people from one 'tribe' into different regional groups, while at the same time mixing up irreconcilable 'tribes'.

I am not in the least saying that everything British is bad, but that their 'divide and rule' or 'indirect rule' was. A solution can be found to the Northern Irish problem by simply granting the people there their freedom.

N I Samwini
Birmingham, UK

Not alone

On behalf of the Lubicon Lake Nation I would like to express our deep appreciation for the $4,000 contribution presented to us by the *New Internationalist* from the sales profits of your Native American cards.

As a small society surrounded by powerful, unprincipled enemies it's easy to get isolated and alone. In addition to the badly-needed money, your continuing support sends an important message to our people that we are not alone – that there are people in the outside world who still care what happens to us.

Chief Bernard Ominayak
Lubicon Lake Indian Nation,
Alberta, Canada

Chief Ominayak (right) with Bruce Cockburn (left) receiving the *New Internationalist* cheque from Bill Moore-Kilgannon.

WESTERN CANADA WILDERNESS COMMITTEE

Consider the Kurds

I read with interest the article on the Kurds in Turkey in *Updates* (**NI 255**). I think it would be very useful to have a whole magazine on the subject. The existence of a people 30 million strong, without their own state and subject to continual repression (currently at its worst in Turkey) deserves bringing to the attention of readers concerned about 'Third World' problems. The fate of the Kurds is politically as well as geographically central to many of the issues in the Middle East. Given the involvement of Western governments in Turkey and northern Iraq it is vital that public opinion in Europe and North America is better informed about the background to the Kurdish question.

Alan Brooke
Huddersfield, UK

Patronized

As a woman I felt more patronized by Stephen Hill's image of the female 'prize' cardboard cut-out (*Endpiece*, **NI 256**), than by the stereotypical thought-patterns which I expect I was supposed to find abrasive.

Not all women are aesthetic monomaniacs: certainly the present so-called 'cat-walk grunge' may be interpreted as a reaction by women against compromising personality and intellect for sexuality. I also feel the author failed to convey the extent to which some women tease men with their sexuality: they are not playing 'Barbie' because there is a background aim of a sexual coup d'état, one which men perhaps only subconsciously acknowledge when they sordidly resort to rape and sexual harassment.

Unlike von Sternberg, the writer obviously failed to appreciate the complexity of women.

Catherine M Hine
Nottingham, UK

One-sided logic

Michael Leydon *Letters* **(NI 256)** has one-sided logic. 'Abortion kills the unborn... they have no choice.' Of course the unborn have no choice of any sort, including no choice to survive or not to do so. That is precisely why it is appropriate for the final choice to be made by the one who actually has the chance to choose – the woman carrying the unborn potential person. To what extent the woman's choice should be restricted or free is a matter of legitimate debate, but to talk about choice on the part an entity that simply cannot exercise it one way or the other – the foetus – is to confuse a very complex and emotive issue.

Eric Stockton
Orkney, Scotland

Repeating pattern

Your issues on *Mexico* **(NI 251)** and *East Timor* **(NI 253)** show a repetition of the same old pattern. From Chiapas, Mexico, to the far reaches of the Indonesian archipelago we see the absolutes of profit and empire causing the genocide of First Peoples; the alliance of the rich and the military against the working poor; the most exploited of the exploited regarded as dispensable and the policy of usurpation of lands, attrition, intimidation and terror enforcing the inequality.

Jim Christoff
Toronto, Canada

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the NI.

Letter from Lagos

Your money or your bank

Saving in Nigeria is a hazardous business. **Elizabeth Obadina** joins the crush of angry savers unable to get their money out.

It is 8.30 am and the air over the breakfast-table is blue with domestic tension. My husband has delayed me and he knew I had set aside today to go to the bank. Now it's too late. Unless I join the small army of customers waiting for the bank gates to swing open at eight sharp I have no chance of withdrawing any money in less than an hour. By 8.30 am the banking hall is full and not even soldiers from the local army cantonment, who bring all the military menace they can to bear upon the bank cashiers, can cash their pay cheques in much less than three hours.

We bank at one of the 'old' banks. You can count their number on the fingers of one hand. But our money is as safe with them as anybody's money can be safe in this crumbling economy. If they fail the country is truly finished.

A few years ago the antiquated methods of our bank drove us to open a new account with a 'second generation' bank. In 1986 the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) meant financial deregulation which led to a host of new banks. With their computers, marble counters and canned classical music, these were like a breath of fresh air to those of us tired and fed-up with the old ones. Here were banks where you weren't forced to forge intimate physical relationships with other hapless customers wedged into the scrummage round each cashier's post. Here were banks which didn't exchange your cheque for a plastic disc which, hours later, at the bank's convenience, you could exchange for cash – assuming the man with the keys to the bank vault had turned up for work.

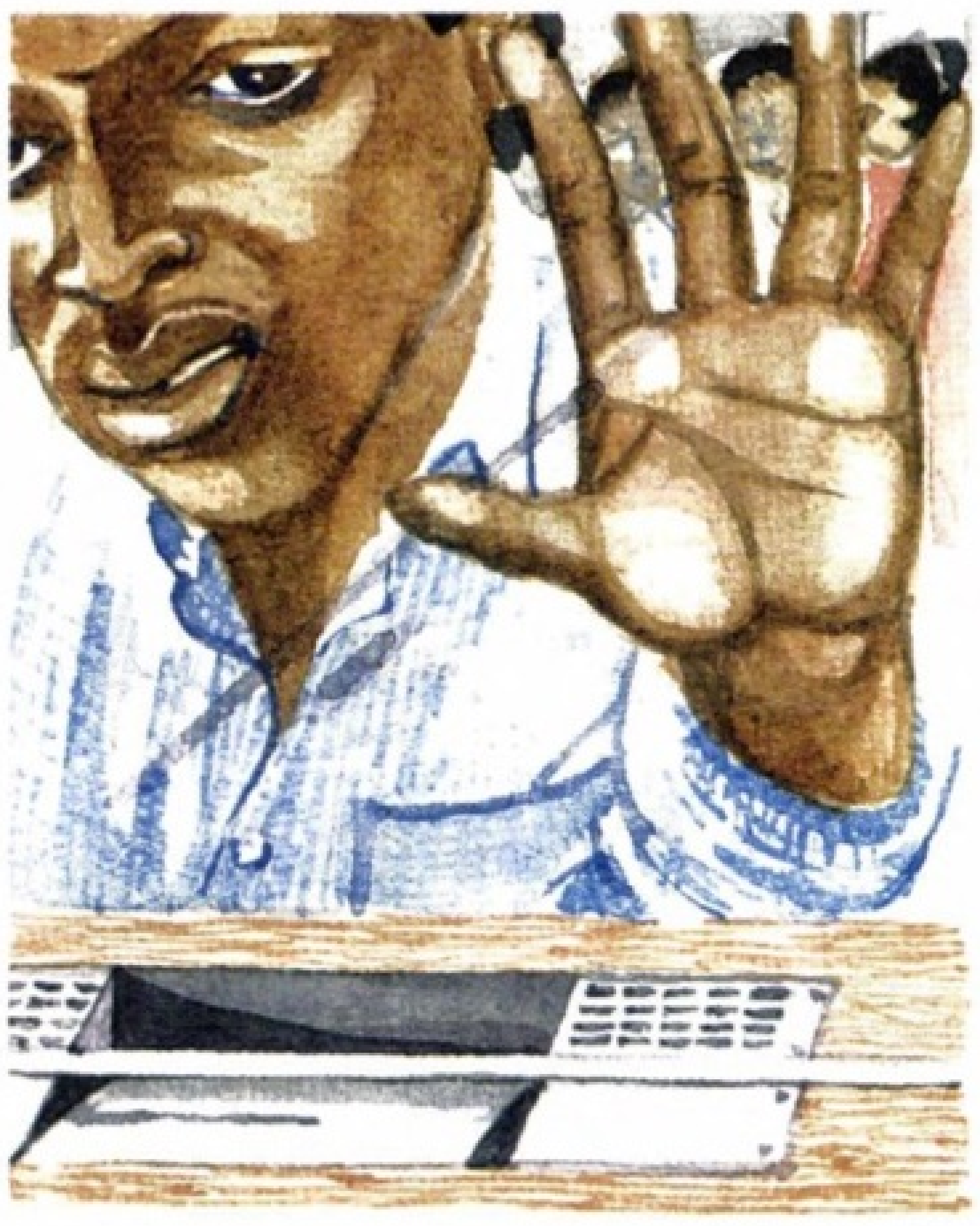


ILLUSTRATION: MIRIAM McCURDY

The post-SAP banks were lovely. Clean, cool, short orderly queues, no discs and smiling staff. The new banks were also mainly for the rich. They demanded opening balances far beyond the means of the ordinary men or women who were still forced to spend hour upon hour in the savings halls of the old banks.

Major banks aren't interested in small savers and the Government, under pressure from various international development agencies, has fostered the establishment of 'people's banks' and 'community banks' to serve the poor with varying degrees of success.

But let me not deviate into the role banks could play in nurturing development. This is Nigeria. What other role could there be for banks in Nigeria if not to allow important bankers to lead a 'London today, New York tomorrow' lifestyle? Ever-alive to the possibilities of realizing easy access to the international jet-set, Nigerians took to the newly-deregulated banking environment like ducks to water. International monetary experts pronounced the nation 'underbanked'. True. And busy as the proverbial beavers, Nigerians set about remedying the situation.

Over 200 new banks were set up during the seven years of SAP. Intended to spread the reach of banking to all of Nigeria's nearly 90 million citizens and to release long-term loans for national development, Nigeria's new banks did nothing of the sort. Many were one-branch operations concentrated along particular streets in Lagos. All of them were looking for quick returns on their capital. Some, it was said, were just fronts for laundering illicitly-gained money. They fought for depositors by offering 20, 30 and sometimes even higher percentage-rates on savings. They raked in the money and speculated heavily in short-term investments, mainly foreign-exchange trading. They had a ball.

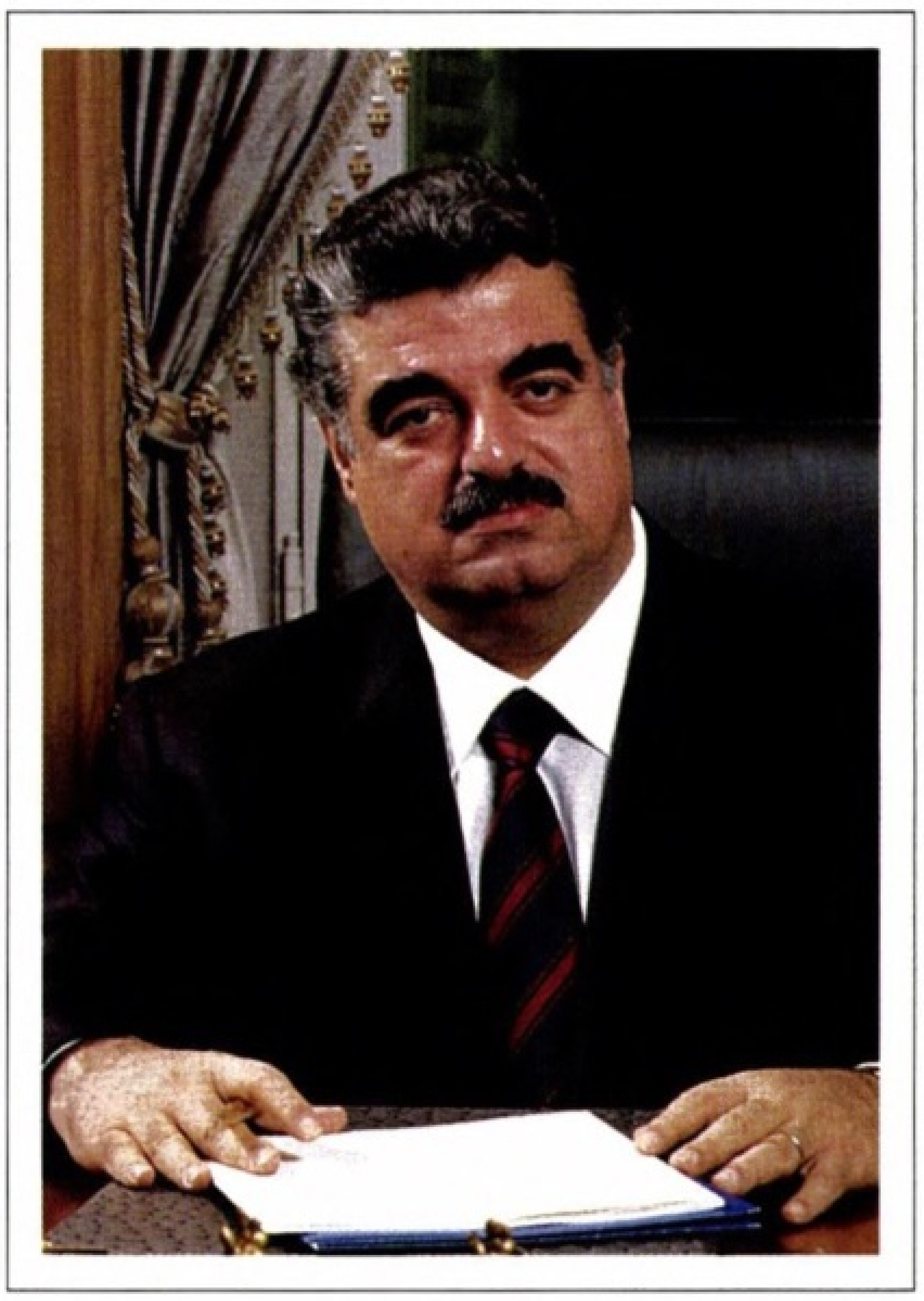
Then the 1994 budget re-regulated the foreign exchange market and interest rates were pegged at 12 per cent for savers and 21 per cent for borrowers. Inflation galloped away at 100 per cent. Suddenly depositors wanted their money back from the new banks, which had to face the prospect of collapse.

My friend Aji has been to her new-breed 'merchant' bank every day this year in a vain attempt to claw back a fixed deposit. Inside their prime-site headquarters the pot plants have died. The chrome fittings have tarnished, the carpets are muddied and the haze of sweaty palm-prints over the glass separating cashiers from their angry customers shows all-too-clearly that the modern banking-party is over. Going to the bank in Nigeria was, is and seems set always to be an unmitigated nightmare. And Tunde and I have still to settle our domestic dispute. ■

Elizabeth Obadina is a freelance writer and journalist who lives in Lagos.

Beirut

Selling the peace



AMMAR ABD RABBO / REX FEATURES

The gunmen may have gone, but all is not yet well. ***Nikki van der Gaag*** *revisits a legendary scene of destruction.*

THE plane circles the airport waiting for permission to land. As we finally come in, wingtips almost touching the roofs of the houses beneath us, I feel a sudden lurch of fear. I've read in the newspapers that there have been two mortar-bomb attacks on the airport in the last few days. No-one has been killed or even injured but I am relieved when we land safely at Heathrow Airport, London in April 1994.

Ten years ago I experienced the same fear while flying in the other direction: to Beirut. The images of Beirut that I had in my mind were those projected by the mainstream media: of bullet-riddled buildings and weeping women, of hostages and kidnapping, of bullets and bombs. I already knew that this was not the whole story. What I didn't know was how much of this I would experience. We hear of countries under occupation, of towns under siege, of cities divided by war. What I learnt in Lebanon affected my view of Sarajevo, of Rwanda, of Somaliland and also of wars in the past; from my own father's stories of hiding in a secret cupboard in Holland during the Second World War, to the horrors of Pol Pot in Cambodia.

But it is now 1994 and I am returning to a Lebanon where, by all accounts, there is peace. There has been little news; peace is not as newsworthy as war. What I have heard from friends makes me hope that things have improved but fear that they have not. I peer out of the window of the plane. Suddenly the mountains come into view, appearing out of the clouds as if by magic, glowing snow-white in the bright sunshine. Below them lies Beirut, compact on the coastline. But in between is a dark pall, as if the same magician who caused the mountain to appear has now cast an evil spell over the city.

The plane dives into the dark cloud, and the shapes of buildings emerge, hazy at first but then quite distinct. Even at this distance I can see many new high-rise buildings amid the old familiar ones.

'The main difference between war and the end of war,' says a friend as we take a taxi through the streets of downtown Hamra, 'is that there is less rubbish in the streets.'

I note a spot in the centre of Beirut where in 1985 I had ducked down as a group of young men in a truck suddenly began to fire off their automatic rifles, spraying bullets into the air and at anyone unfortunate enough to be in the way.

For the 90 per cent of Lebanese people not involved in the war, daily life then was hazardous, unpredictable and frightening.

So what has changed? The fighting has

ALEX WEBB / MAGNUM

The shelling of Beirut, dawn to dusk, by Israeli artillery in 1982 (above).
Salesman Prime Minister Hariri – grand designs but what about community spirit? (far left).

stopped. There are also fewer men with guns, rocket-propelled grenades and other armoury. The militias have been largely disarmed and disbanded. The 'Green Line' dividing the city has been dismantled. New and expensive private buildings are going up. But much is still the same.

Before the war started in 1975, Lebanon was a place where the moneyed and the leisured could ski in the morning and swim in the afternoon, a paradise for those who put their faith in market forces and their money in banks and real estate. Margaret Thatcher would have loved it.

But there were no bus services. At least half of the education system had been privatized. Social services were non-existent. Those who might otherwise have expected to depend on the State – the poor and the marginalized – had to fall back on their own resources. Beirut was no paradise for those with no money.

Theodor Hanf, who has written a complex study of Lebanon, compared it to France: 'De Gaulle found a country with 360 types of cheese difficult to govern – but what of a country with as many varieties of olive as there are villages?'[1]

During the sixteenth century, in Ottoman times, a person would describe themselves as belonging first to the Ottoman state, then to the area in which they lived and finally to their religion. Since the war began, religious – or 'confessional' – allegiance has become increasingly important.

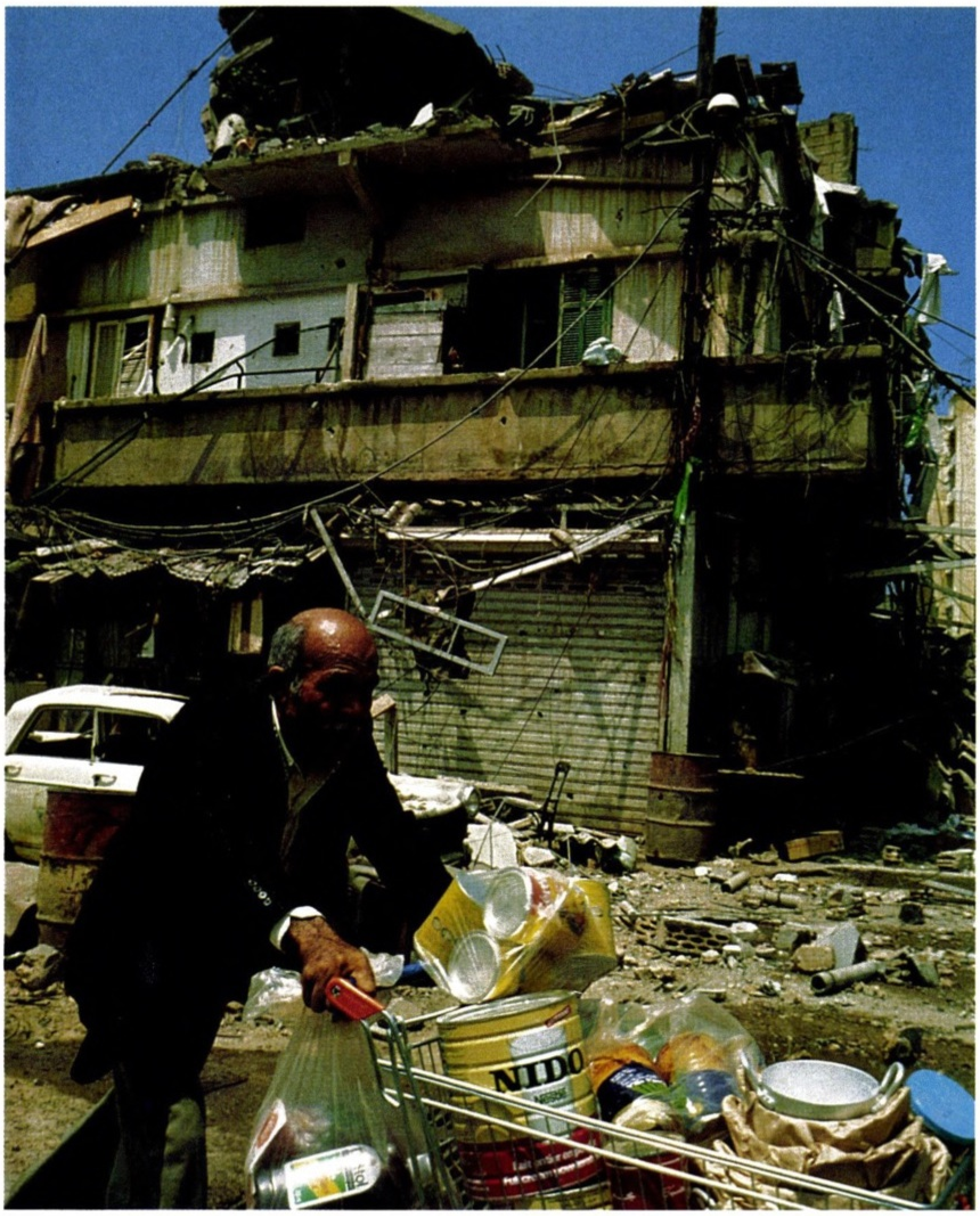
The First Republic, set up in 1943, built in a system of power-sharing between the Lebanese. Government posts were divided between representatives of the main 'confessions'. So the President was always a Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, and so on. The largest confession was to have the greater number of posts. This was fine in theory, but what it meant in practice was that confessionalism became institutionalized. The domination of the Christians was enshrined in the National Pact – an unwritten agreement on power-sharing. This led to much bitterness, particularly on the part of the marginalized but fast-growing numbers of Shi'a Muslims.

The Christians in Lebanon are mainly Maronites, an offshoot of the Catholic Church. They have lived in Lebanon since the fifth century and are dominant in north of the country and the East side of Beirut. Some wanted their own Christian statelet if their problems in a multi-confessional state could not be resolved. This went hand-in-hand with more sinister political leanings – Christian President Pierre Gemayel had visited Germany in the 1930s and set up his own militia whose organization – though not its ideology – was modelled on Hitler's 'brownshirts'. There was tension between the Christians and the Palestinians, who had lived in Lebanon since 1948 when they had been forced to leave Palestine on the creation of the State of Israel. They had become a powerful force, influential in the south of the country and West Beirut.

In 1975 this all came to a head when shots were fired into the congregation where Gemayel was worshipping, killing several people, including his bodyguard. The car was identified as belonging to the Democratic Front, a Palestinian group. A few hours later a bus carrying Palestinian civilians passed through the same area and jumpy Christian militiaman opened fire, killing 27 Palestinians and injuring many more.

This signalled the start of heavy fighting between the Christians and the Palestinians, who were later supported by an alliance of the Lebanese Left.

Early versions of 'ethnic cleansing' were perpetrated by all groups during the war. In the first years of the conflict, the



ALEX WEBB / MAGNUM

Many hands, heavy work: the divide between rich and poor is increasing (right and above).

Palestinian camps of Karantina and Tel-al-Zaater were razed to the ground and their inhabitants massacred by the right-wing Christian militias. The Palestinians responded by 'cleansing' the Christian town of Damour. No group was innocent of the crimes that were committed.

What makes a man join a militia? Economic security, protection, power – upward mobility and status, all have their part to play. Many of the militiamen were fighting for these rather than for a cause, as the questions asked of militiamen fighting on the Green Line in 1985 showed: 'Who is the President of Lebanon?' 'Don't know,', most had replied. 'What does your militia, your party, stand for?', 'Don't know,' 'Why are you fighting?' 'Don't know.'

The novelist and writer Jean Makdisi had her own questions to ask of the killings in Beirut: 'When the Karantina massacre took place, rumours were rife that the young men who had committed it were high on drugs. Perhaps they were. The point is, we couldn't believe such cruelty to be possible... Such an explanation is harder to believe today. Too many people have done too many unspeakable things. I want to know whether I can escape the apparently inescapable conclusion that *I* could do it. It is when I look at my own face in the mirror that I am most frightened. Is mine the face of one of the damned?'[2]

Ordinary people joined the militias and did terrible things to each other. The militias of the different confessional groups had considerable power. They ruled supreme in their fiefdoms. They ran the ports – and benefited from their substantial income. They were in charge of water, electricity, roads and even schools. People had no option but to rely on whoever ran things in their neighbourhood. As a result they became increasingly cut off from anyone in a region controlled by a different group.

I remember having to brave 16 different checkpoints along the 40 miles of coast road from Sidon to Beirut. And I will never forget travelling with a friend – who happened to be a nun – and hearing her tell a different story to each group of militiamen. It was a good thing the people at each checkpoint were mortal enemies and couldn't verify our stories. We were aid workers, teachers, clerics – whatever would get us through. 'But isn't telling lies a sin?' I asked her. 'So is getting deliberately shot,' she replied grimly.

Once the shooting had started, it was difficult to stop. Too many people had an interest in ensuring that it continued. Internally, the leaders of the different groups each had their own agenda. Externally, the Israelis wanted to 'secure' their northern border and to fight the Palestinians, the Syrians to consolidate their power in the region and to stop Israeli encroachment, the US to maintain its strategic importance in the area, the French to support the Christians, the Iranians to back the Shi'a Muslims...

The most difficult time for Beirutis was during the Israeli siege in 1982. The Israelis had invaded Lebanon for the second time with the aim of ousting the Palestinian military presence. Short of food and water, living in basements, Beirutis held out for three months. For me, its full horror is encapsulated in Robert Fisk's interview with Dr Amal Shamaa at the Barbir hospital in Beirut. Shamaa describes two five-day-old babies who had just been phosphorous-bombed: 'I had to take the babies and put them in buckets of water to put out the flames. When I took them out half an hour later, they were still burning. Even in the mortuary, they smouldered for hours.'[3] The Israeli invasion left 12,000 Lebanese and Palestinians dead, 40,000 wounded, 300,000 homeless, and 100,000 without shelter. Palestinian fighters were evacuated from Beirut; the Israelis still occupy the south of Lebanon. They launched a massive military incursion as recently as July 1993, and have attacked 16 times already this year.

In 1989, the Taif agreement, signed by members of the Lebanese multi-confessional Parliament, heralded the peace. 'People have had enough of war,' was the refrain I heard most frequently. The Madrid Agreement between Israel and the PLO also meant that it was in no-one's interest for the war to continue. The end of the Cold War had changed old alliances. The election of a well-known billionaire, Rafic Hariri, as Prime Minister in 1992 was greeted by many with relief. Perhaps the war had finally ended.

The dismantling of the Green Line which had split Beirut in two brought many curious visitors from both sides. Christians from the East visited the West and Muslims from the West ventured into the East. For younger people it was the first time they had seen the other side. Only then was the extent of the damage revealed and everyone began to realize just how difficult the road to real peace would be. As Jean Makdisi asked: 'We survived the war, but can we survive the peace?' [2]

Peace in Lebanon today is a peace with provisos: peace with the south still occupied by Israel, the rest effectively occupied by Syria; peace with continued regular incursions by Israel and the possible permanent dispossession of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who have never known any other home but Lebanon.

And for many people, peace has come hand-in-hand with poverty.

Individual enterprise at the expense of collective action is the key to the new Beirut – in the same way as it was to the old one. Hariri's Government has prioritized the physical reconstruction of the country. But the main emphasis has been on mega-projects which will enhance the prestige of Beirut and re-establish its importance as a trading city: the reconstruction of the city centre, the rebuilding of the Sports Stadium, the creation of an enormous conference centre. But Hariri's promises about the things that matter most to the people of Beirut – reliable electricity within a year, a functioning telephone system, rebuilt schools – have not been fulfilled. They have melted like the snow on the mountains above Beirut. Hariri's popularity in a recent poll dived to seven per cent.

Can you rebuild a country and give it a sense of communal identity by individual enterprise alone?

This is what the Government seems to be trying to do. Collectivism of any kind is being attacked. The democratic freedoms that Beirutis hold dear and which they feel mark them out are under threat. In the last few months the once-powerful unions have been split, the media muzzled, the death penalty re-introduced. In addition, people are concerned about the amount of power still wielded by the Syrians.

The rumours that bubble through the city have it that half the Government is being paid an extra salary by Hariri, effectively stifling any opposition. Raging inflation and rising unemployment have hit everyone except the very rich. The average monthly wage has been raised to 200,000 Lebanese pounds, which sounds a lot but works out at $120. As the electricity supply in Beirut goes off and on at roughly six-hour intervals, those who cannot afford the private generators that pollute the atmosphere use batteries or candles. For people who live in flats this means countless climbs up dark staircases because the elevators don't work. A friend counted once: 3,000 stairs a day.

C. STEELE-PERKINS / MAGNUM

The divide between rich and poor is increasing. Education and health are either private and affordable only for the wealthy, or public and in a parlous state financially. The confessional voluntary agencies like Hizbollah, the 'Party of God', are stepping in to provide basic services. Other voluntary agencies face increasing demand while the financial tap is being turned off because foreign funding agencies think everything is now OK.

As I left the problems of peaceful Beirut behind me – and wondered about the mortar bombs at London Airport – I reflected on the fact that after so much suffering, peace has not yet fulfilled its promise. A student I met in a school in the suburbs of Beirut put it this way: 'Families who have lost someone in the war – and there are many of us – will take more than one generation to forget. The war has created hatred between people.'

But what will pull the country through is the spirit of its people and their will to engage with the future. A survey of economically-active people during the 1980s found that 86 per cent believed that 'co-existence between the communities is still possible'. The Taif Agreement which ended the war set the blueprint once again for a multi-confessional state. For this to be a reality, the Government has to have an agenda for reconciliation as well as reconstruction. It must have a commitment to invest in education and health as well as roads and airports. Reconstructing a city and a country is not just about bricks and mortar. It is about building a democratic consensus which allows people to live together in peace. As Kamal Salibi, the Lebanese historian, pointed out, conflict is more interesting to outsiders than consensus, 'but consensus has the advantage over conflict as a way of life'.[4] ■

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1 This and other Hanf quotes are taken from *Coexistence in wartime Lebanon* (IB Tauris and the Centre for Lebanese Studies 1993) **2** Jean Makdisi *Beirut Fragments* Persea Books (New York 1990) **3** *Pity the Nation* by Robert Fisk (Andre Deutsch 1990) **4** *From Lebanon: A history of conflict and consensus*, edited by Nadim Shehadi and Dana Haffar Mills (IB Tauris and the Centre for Lebanese Studies 1988)

Who's who

The different religious groups are known as 'confessions'. Many are ruled by particular families which have their roots in the old feudal system.

CHRISTIANS

The Christians have long dominated economic and political life. They have strong links with France, the old colonial power. The main group is the **Maronites**, a church now in union with Rome but with very separate origins dating back before the fifth century AD. There are also significant numbers of **Greek Orthodox** and **Greek Catholics.**

The Christian militia is the **Lebanese Forces** which began as the military wing of the Phalange Party. In 1991 it was disbanded and transformed into a political party, which is now banned.

MUSLIMS

Sunni Islam was the official religion of the Ottoman state. Sunnis have close ties with other Arab states. The majority of Palestinians are also Sunni.

The **Shi'a** are the other Muslim group, whose numbers are growing fast. Shi'a's have two main parties, which are also militias - **Amal,** and **Hizbollah**, the Iranian-supported 'Party of God' .

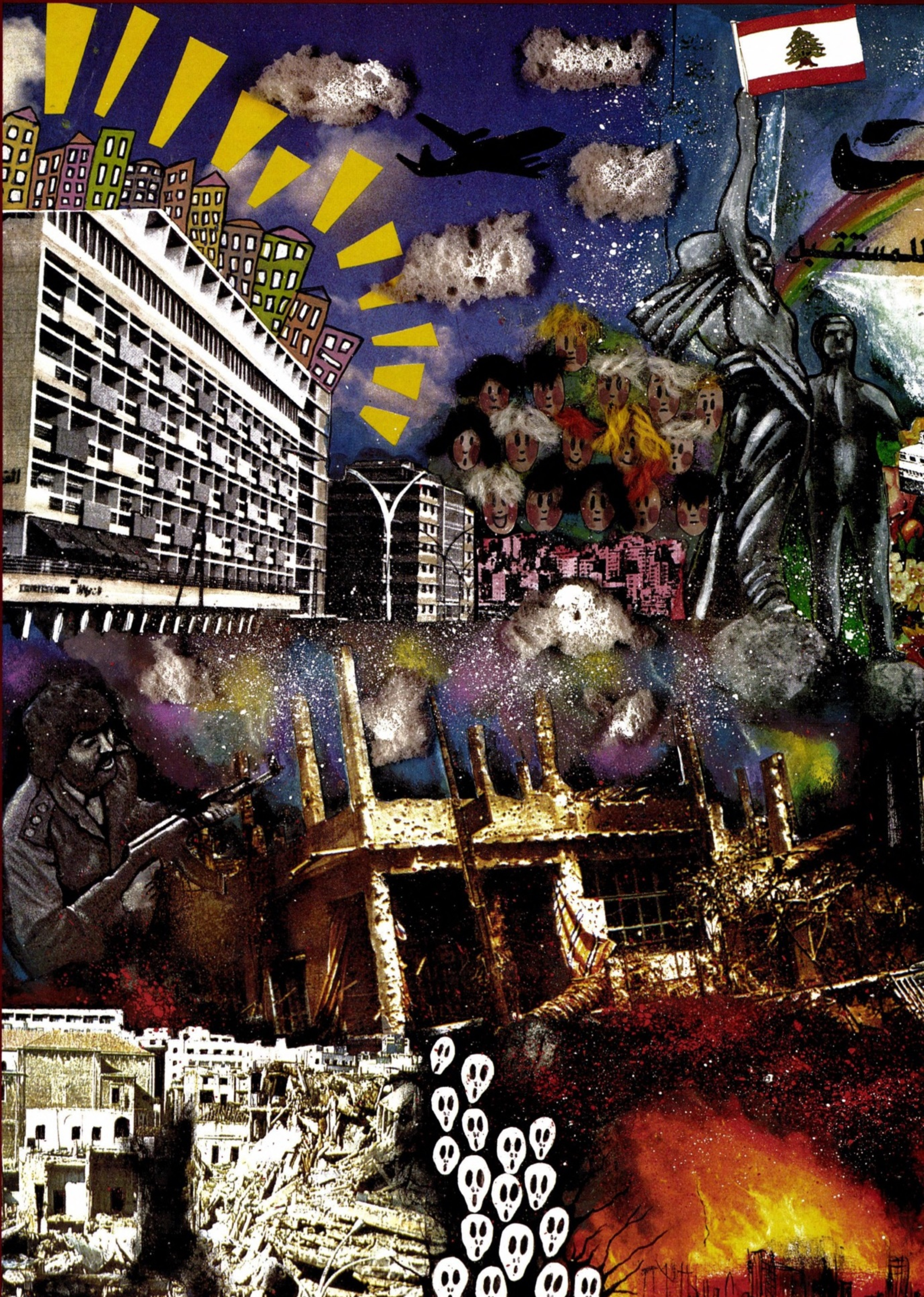
The **Druze** are an offshoot of Islam who have lived developed their own religion, They have lived in the Lebanese mountains since the 11th century. Their party - and their militia - is the **Progressive Socialist Party.**

IMMIGRANT GROUPS

Armenians form a significant minority. They arrived in Lebanon at the end of the last century and the beginning of this one as a result of massacres in Turkey. The French gave them citizenship in 1924, partly to swell the number of Christians.

Palestinians first arrived in 1948, when the state of Israel was created. More joined them in 1967 after the Arab-Israeli war. Most do not have citizenship and many still live in refugee camps on the outskirts of the main towns.

BEIRUT – ANCIENT CITY OF THE FUTURE



مدينة عريقة
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Tripoli
LEBANON
Beirut
Baalbek
Zahle
SYRIA
Bekaa Valley
Sidon
Jezzine
Israeli occupied Zone.
Marjayoun
Tyre
0 10 20
Kilometres
ISRAEL
West Beirut
East Beirut
Sabra
Shatila
Green Line
LEBANON
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Burj Al-Barajneh
Airport
Key ▨ - Palestinian Camps

JESSICA M ROBINSON

RAYMOND DEPARDON / MAGNUM

Steaming coffee and seeming calm after a night under shell fire.

When **machine-guns** become **umbrellas**

Seventeen years of war in Beirut inflicted deep psychological wounds on its citizens. ***Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab*** *records the painful process of recovery.*

A HUGE black hole stands out at the very heart of Beirut. It was once the old city centre. With its historic squares and monuments, modern commercial centres, hotels, restaurants, cafes, brothels and cinemas, this was the focal point of the city, indeed of the whole country. Lebanese from all social and religious groups mingled here and contributed to what was called the 'Lebanese miracle': the quick ascendance of the young Republic to economic prosperity after its independence in 1943.

Before the war Beirut embodied a certain view of the Republic, albeit a controversial one, as a prosperous free market built on individual initiative and as a harmonious haven for many different religious and ethnic minorities. The war ruined and depopulated the old city centre and transformed it into a 'black hole', erasing it and all that it stood for. Instead it became a black-out in the memory of the Lebanese and of their country.

The city centre was emptied of its inhabitants and businesses, its buildings were confiscated, destroyed and burnt down, and the whole area was then transformed into a dangerous military zone, a frightening no-man's land. People no longer had access to their shops and offices, nor were they able to meet with their colleagues and neighbours.

Today the Government has grandiose plans for a new futuristic city centre. In the meantime a budding entrepreneur has set out bright plastic chairs and tables as an improvised coffee-shop for viewers of the ruins. Hawkers sell postcards and illegally procured Lebanese cedar carved into improbable shapes. The war has ended but the legacy of the war remains intact, especially in people's minds and hearts.

While acts of violence during the war were generally carried out by a relatively small number of Lebanese and non-Lebanese, war did not take place 'out there', on some front away from civilian life, but in the heart of it: in the apartments, shops and houses of its inhabitants. The ever-present threat of violence in its many forms – random and sudden shelling, sniping, kidnapping, car bombs – was everywhere and nowhere.

The general atmosphere of constant insecurity transformed the Beirutis' environment into a minefield: car bombs or other devices could explode anywhere, shelling could start at any time, any armed militiaman could impose his will on anyone else, and in-fighting among militias could break out at any moment. Beirutis were permanently conscious of these dangers and thus tried to reduce their movements to a bare minimum. The Beiruti felt like a hostage in his or her own city. As Lebanese poet Nour Salman put it: 'We are the inhabitants of the cages'.

In times of truce Beirutis remained constantly aware of the possibility of renewed outbursts of violence. They walked in the street knowing that any of the cars around them might explode. They took their children to school knowing that shelling might start while they were on the road or on their way home. They sat in a cinema hoping that a time-bomb would not go off. They knew they could be catapulted within a split second from a state of pseudo-normality into a state of apocalypse where totally different rules applied.

Journalists often presented photographs of Beirutis during the war lying on the beach or having dinner in restaurants as evidence of their unshakeable pursuit of the *dolce vita*, their indifference or habituation to war. The photographs could not tell how precious those moments of calm were to the woman on the beach, perhaps after the night of shelling she endured. Nor could they show her nervous exhaustion, her permanent anxiety for her loved ones, her acute worry about tomorrow. Engaging in their activities under the most difficult conditions was for Beirutis almost the only way of defying the rules of the civil war. Besides, they did not have much choice.

In this situation of permanent threat perceptions developed into defence mechanisms. Sight and sound became particularly important to estimate potential or actual dangers. Apartments, rooms and offices were perceived in terms of their exposure to possible shells, walls were checked for their resistance to possible blasts, and squares and seaside promenades, once recreational areas, were looked upon as highly exposed and dangerous places. Empty streets provoked uneasiness. One became nostalgic for traffic jams and the state of normality they symbolized, in spite of all the anger and hostility they caused. The sight of running people still inspires panic.

The generally tense atmosphere also gave rise to perceptual errors. Umbrellas, for instance, are still mistaken for machine guns. Auditory perceptual errors are more frequent still. The most common case is confusing the sound of banging doors or thunder with exploding shells or bombs. In times of shelling, it became vitally important to listen for exploding shells or rockets and to identify their direction in order to estimate potential danger. The war created a new sonic landscape.

There are more fruitful alternatives than the opposing poles of shooting one another and falling into each other's arms.

Geography too came to play a major role in shaping the social life of the city. Even though Beirutis tried hard, and at great risk to themselves, to transcend barricades, check-points and demarcation lines to meet family members, friends or business partners, the elements shaping the face of the city imposed themselves very strongly. This led to the discovery and development of a new social life within one's immediate spatial environment; but it also led to the loss or disturbance of another social life, based on familial, personal, professional, intellectual or other affinities. This loss is not renewed overnight, even though the barricades are now down.

Ghosts on the Green Line: once a busy street, now a wilderness

ABBAS / MAGNUM

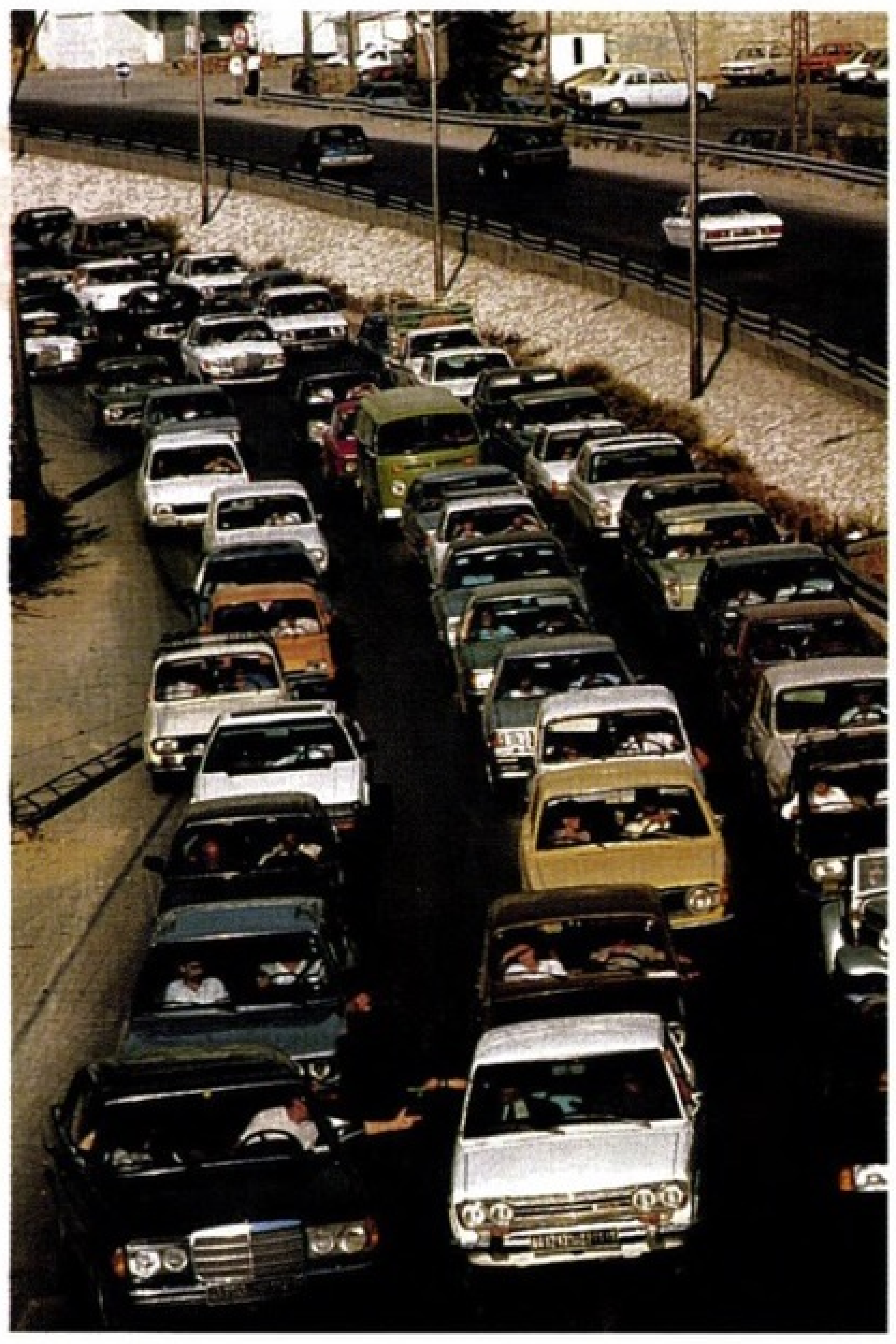
Beirutis are also isolated from those who have not lived through the same violence. No matter how open and eager they may be to establish friendships with foreigners, they often feel a gap they cannot bridge because of the burden of the dramatic experience they carry within them. When asked to describe the crisis of their country or their daily life, Beirutis often do not know where to start.

The difficulty in talking about the war lies on the one hand in the pain and sorrow which often accompany the experiences lived through during the war. These are so traumatic that they are removed from the usual range of experience, thus lying beyond the framework of normal verbalization and expression. And yet, because of their traumatic nature, Beirutis feel the urgent need to talk about them and to express their shock, pain and exasperation. They remain torn between the wish to forget their war experiences and the need to communicate them to others.

How is it then that the people of Lebanon tolerated all the years of brutality and misery without rising up? The answer is that they didn't. Several mass rallies and demonstrations, especially after 1984, were organized against the fighting by trade unions, peace organizations, artists, women's groups and relatives of kidnapped and handicapped people. But every time these demonstrations were neutralized by the many local and regional 'warlords' who had an interest in pursuing the war. Even though the demonstrations were unable to stop the war, they laid the foundation for a new consensus. Society was brought together through common grief and the recognition that after 17 years of war, no party could eliminate the other: if living together was difficult, separation was even harder.

This consensus still remains to be built; but not through sentimental pathos accompanied by a renewal of the problems which nurtured the conflict. There are more fruitful alternatives than the opposing poles of shooting one another and falling into each other's arms. The first duty of the Lebanese today is to be honest toward ourselves, for at stake are our lives and our future. The regional and international game of power has offered us a break from the madness of violence. It is up to us to take advantage of this opportunity and make it a new start for a healthier future.

The war started and ended without the explicit will of most of us, but fed on our fears, wishes and dreams. Now is the time to examine these together if we wish to become less vulnerable to the demons of collective aggression and collective suicide. It is time to set up civil forums of debate about our past, our present and our future. It is also time to cry out our wounds and our fears. We live in a region where ethnic and religious conflicts have caused cumulative injuries throughout the ages, and Lebanon seems to have inherited most of them, with Beirut as their epitome. Unless we are honest about our fears and fantasies, we won't be able to take the first step towards reinstating democracy. The biggest challenge to Lebanon today is to move from the ancient and recent wounds of its different groups to the democratic duty of mutual respect and understanding. This is something that no-one else will do for us. It is in our vital interest to do it as properly and as thoroughly as we can. We are the guardians of the ruins but also the builders of the future. ■


ELI REED / MAGNUM

Bumper to bumper: standstill traffic is better than empty streets.

Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab teaches philosophy at the American University of Beirut. This article is adapted from *The Beirut Review.*

Smart patches, shame about the coat

There were high hopes of billionaire Prime Minister Rafic Hariri when he was elected in 1992.
***Kamal Hamdan** analyses a balance sheet that's already gone into the red.*

YOU can only go on patching a mended coat for so long before it comes apart at the seams. Lebanon is like that coat. Four years have passed since the end of the war and the gaping holes reveal the old clothes underneath. The families of the 125,000 dead and 250,000 wounded during the war are still mourning their loss; 75,000 people have permanent disabilities; half-a-million people left the country during the fighting. The economic damage amounted to $30 to $40 billion.

The Government of billionaire Prime Minister Hariri raised people's hopes for a new start. But improvements on the economic front prioritized mega-reconstruction plans and neglected social concerns. Patching up the coat that is Lebanon with sumptuous brocades only stretches the tears.

For the first two years after the war ended security was the main objective. The armed forces needed to be reunified and redeployed, the militias dissolved and reintegrated into the State apparatus and the Palestinians – especially their armed presence – brought under the Government's thumb. The arm of the State, for so long non-existent, began to exert rigorous control, which also extended to the political arena. For the first time in 20 years there were Parliamentary elections; new electoral laws were introduced and the Council of Ministers was given extended powers which made it the most important institution in the political system.

But it was not until Rafic Hariri's Government took over in October 1992 that things seemed to improve. Within a few weeks of the arrival of the Hariri Government the plummeting Lebanese pound gained 30 per cent in value, ending almost ten years of deterioration. The hopes of the Lebanese people for their economic and political future rose almost as sharply. An optimistic spirit rapidly replaced earlier feelings of disorientation, confusion and despair.

Hariri re-opened the file on reconstruction, which had been dormant since the war ended. A three-year plan – the NERP, or 'National Emergency and Recovery Programme' – was unveiled requiring a total budget of $2.3 billion. The Government contracted $1.5 billion of foreign credit. Reconstruction projects for electricity, telecommunications, Beirut's port, road systems and the suburbs of Beirut got underway. A ten-year plan envisaged an accelerated development process and a doubling of per capita income.

Economic improvements prioritized mega-reconstruction and neglected social concerns.

The Hariri Government seemed at first sight to have inaugurated a new era characterized by a long-missed economic rationality and grandiose projects. The emphasis was on external markets, capital assets and international firms specializing in public works. But many people have major criticisms of the Government's programmes. Despite early economic successes, the Hariri Government is attempting to conjure away fundamental, unresolved political problems.

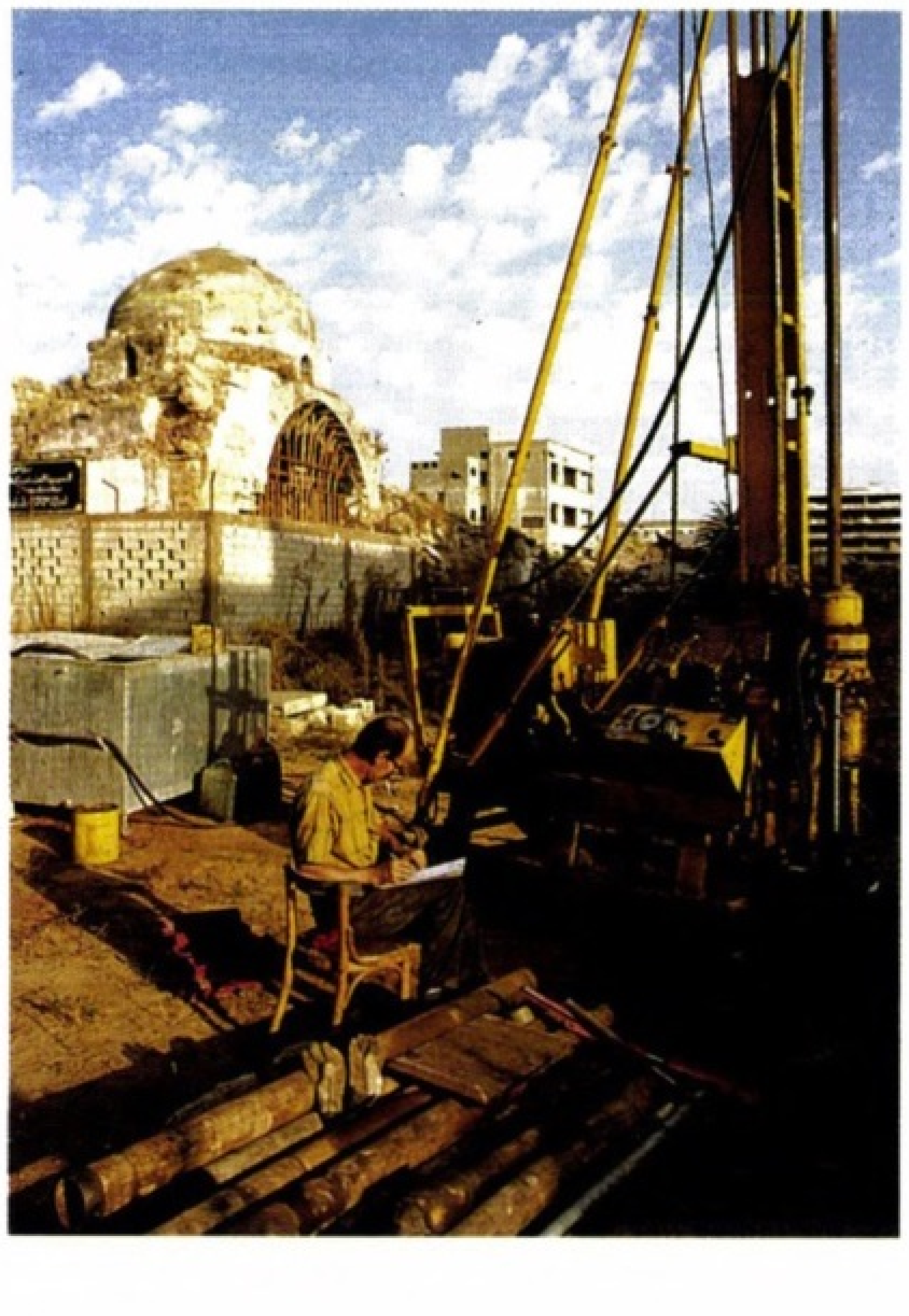
The most significant of these is the issue of reconciliation. So far the process of reconciliation between the different groups

CHRIS STOWERS / PANOS

Road to recovery: still a long way to go (above).
Reflecting on rubble: grandiose projects are the priority (below).

who fought each other during the war has been limited to the élites. There has been no attempt to reconcile ordinary citizens so they can live side by side once more.

Other equally serious political problems remain as well. The Government must guarantee the representation of the Christians, once the dominant group in Lebanon and now effectively marginalized. Recent attempts by Hariri to do this have not been successful because he is only allowed by the Syrians to operate within certain margins.



CHRIS STOWERS / PANOS

Then there are the possible effects of the increasing pressure being put by the Government on democratic freedoms: on the media, the trade unions and the right to peaceful demonstrations. And finally there is the inherent contradiction at the heart of the 'marriage' between the rule of Hariri on the one hand and that of the still-feudal (and 'confessional') 'warlords' on the other...

Hoping that these problems will just go away, or trying to minimize their importance, will not change their reality one iota. On the contrary, it will ensure that they surface at some point in the future and thus become a source of instability.

The reconstruction programmes adopted by the Hariri Government favour an ostentatious public investment policy far beyond the capacity of either the State administration or internal finance systems. The social side of reconstruction – housing for ordinary people, schools, hospitals, etc – and also the support needed for the private sector, are largely being sacrificed in favour of a few grandiose projects: the Palais de Congrès, the Sports City, road and railway systems, the disproportionate enlargement of the airport... There is insufficient national reflection on the alternatives, nor on the major choices being made.

There is also the issue of Lebanon's role in the Arab world. In the past this role was an important one. But the productive capacity of the country has changed radically during the civil war. So has the country's Arab hinterland. The flow of goods and services, human resources and relations with the rest of the world is no longer the same as it was.

The Middle East as a whole is undergoing profound changes with the arrival of Arab-Israeli peace. The majority of the reconstruction plans for Lebanon were fixed before the Madrid summit in 1993. It is therefore legitimate to ask whether these plans are still relevant. For example, will Beirut still be able to serve as a focal point for trade along the eastern Mediterranean coast if Tel Aviv is opened up to Arab customers?

There is not even agreement about the immediate objectives realized by the Hariri Government. It is true that certain indices have improved – the balance of payments, Central Bank reserves, the budgetary deficit, transfers of capital, the value of the Lebanese pound.

But the last months have been marked by an increasingly-severe economic recession. Public investment projects have been planned but not implemented. There has been a massive influx of manual labourers from abroad – Syrian construction workers and Sri Lankan domestic workers – who send their money back home. Taxes on interest have been kept at an inflated level. All these factors together have created a feeling of economic crisis without recent parallel.

Even the middle classes have become poorer. Their salaries have failed miserably to keep up with the cost of living. Inflation between 1992 and 1993 reached more than 150 per cent, but during this time there was only one official salary increase of 45 per cent. The Government's attitude to the price of goods and public services has hit everyone hard. In two years the cost of phone calls has increased eight-fold and electricity bills are twenty times higher than they were.

There has been no attempt to reconcile ordinary citizens so they can live side by side once more.

As a result a process of social marginalization, which had already begun before the war, is accelerating. The poor are getting poorer. There is little in the way of social protection or welfare except that provided by private 'confessional' groups.

Finally, the crucial questions still remain and there's no convincing response on the horizon. Towards what kind of society is Lebanon heading? Will it be a welfare state? Or will we see a small segment of society improve itself at the expense of the middle classes and the poor? If so, what will be the consequences for civil society, democratic freedoms and more generally for the quality of life? Only a secular and democratic alternative will resolve the country's complex web of problems. Otherwise the coat that is Lebanon could be torn to shreds once again. ■

Kamal Hamdan is Director of the Consultation and Research Institute in Beirut.

Horizon 2000

The city centre around Martyrs' Square has been devastated by war. **Chris Martin** unearths the controversy surrounding the plans to rebuild it.

It is hard to imagine, standing amid the devastation of Beirut's old city centre, that the gutted buildings and filthy overgrown streets were once its commercial and cultural heartland. Today, the same area has become the focus of a reconstruction scheme that has sparked a controversy over the identity and future of post-war Lebanon.

This scheme is called Horizon 2000. It is the brainchild of Prime Minister Hariri, and it envisages the effective privatization of the whole area. Massive capital is being raised by offering shares to Lebanese and Arab investors and the district will be turned into the new business capital of the Middle East.

Opposition to the plan has been fierce. Some have argued that the creation of a global financial metropolis in Lebanon is entirely inappropriate at a time when social amenities such as housing, education and health services are in such appalling condition. Others have accused Solidere, the company set up to oversee the project, of being Hariri's profit-making puppet, criticizing its plans to build Manhattan-style skyscrapers as 'vulgar' and expressing concern about the preservation of archaeological sites in the area.

Two years from its outset, criticisms remain. But it is also possible to detect voices of optimism. At Solidere's offices, officials claim the $600 million raised is evidence of Lebanese confidence in the scheme. A more independent source of optimism is Professor Samir Khalaf, a sociologist at the American University of Beirut, who accepts that the project is based on profit but argues that Solidere have shown a genuine sensitivity to public concern. 'Over the last year the plans have changed six times,' he says. 'The archaeological sites are now treated like sacred cows and the vulgar aspects of the initial plans have been dropped. Residential planning has increased and the provision for public space is higher than anywhere else in Beirut.' He sees the main task of the project as creating areas within the city where civil society can re-emerge; places 'which we can begin to see as shared, and where we can begin to heal the brutalized and fragmented tendencies brought on us by the war.'

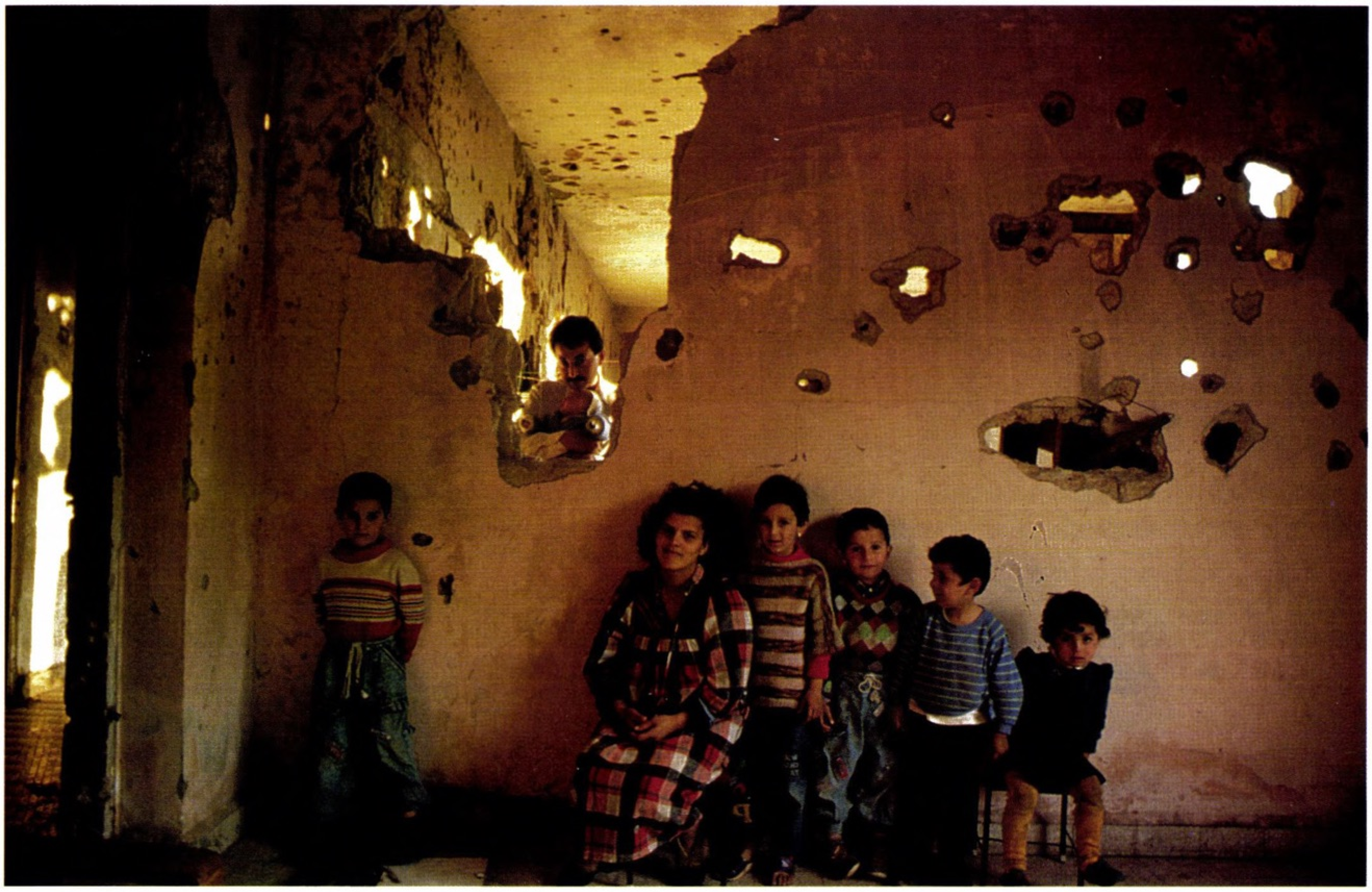
BEYROUTH CENTRE-VILLE

Futuristic planning: architect Ghassan Zein contemplates the model of the new city centre.

C.STEELE-PERKINS / MAGNUM

Those like Khalaf are adamant that the decision to concentrate on the area is both valid and symbolically important: 'I appreciate the many problems in the country,' he told me, 'but that area is special to Lebanon. It is the symbol of our collective pride and our shame, and we must reclaim it as a matter of urgency. If we ignore it we run the constant risk of slipping back into the abyss.'

Refreshing though such enthusiasm is, there are still strong grounds for caution. None of the building work has actually begun. No-one knows quite how it will be evaluated when it does. And even then, it is expected to take 20 years to complete



C. STEELE-PERKINS / MAGNUM

Baby and the bullet-holes: many displaced families still live in appalling conditions.

Mr Fixit

Resettling hundreds of thousands of people who fled their homes during the war is a herculean task. ***Maria Spiers*** *meets* ***Kamal Feghali****, the man at the centre of the action.*

A SMALL dapper man waves a ruler at the two men in front of him. They are sheepish, shifting uncomfortably on their feet and looking at their shoes. Around the large room a dozen other people wait, some sitting, some standing, buzzing like bees around a honey-pot. They may have to wait a long time... Kamal Feghali receives between 300 and 400 people a day, from early in the morning until after 10 pm. His job? He works for the Ministry for the Displaced.

Around the large desk a sharp exchange is taking place between three men at the centre of things. The man with the ruler bangs on the floor. The second man is a landlord, the third his tenant. The landlord wants his house back. The tenant has nowhere to go. Kamal Feghali questions them sharply, then picks up his mobile phone. A few short sentences and all is resolved. A new place will be found for the tenant and his family – but it will take a few weeks and the landlord will just have to be patient. They shake hands and the two go off.

A woman comes forward, smartly dressed in black and gold. Her house is occupied by an ex-militia man who refuses to leave despite having been paid by the Ministry to do so. She is told, warmly but firmly, to come back tomorrow.

Then a whole family shuffles forward: tiny, bescarved mother, father, burly son and assorted relatives. They are plainly poor villagers from the mountain area. Like so many others they have made a makeshift home in the ruins of a bombed building. They have been there for five years and now they want to go back home, to their village. They need money to rebuild their houses. Can Mr Feghali give them some? Mr Feghali might, but needs to know more about them first. There are many false claims from people who already have somewhere to live, hoping to get access to the $12,000 given for the reconstruction of houses which have been completely destroyed, or the $7,000 given to those whose homes have been severely damaged.

All this time phones have been ringing constantly. One sounds just like the toy that my own three-year-old son plays with. Another is black, heavy and old-fashioned. A third is a satellite phone – it is easier to call from one side of Beirut to the other via

GILLES PERESS / MAGNUM

No place under the sun: 800,000 people had to flee from their homes during the war.

New York than to get through on the rickety and unreliable public system. From time to time Kamal Feghali's assistants poke their heads round the door to announce yet more visitors.

Most of the supplicants today are Christians from the east side of Beirut. There is supposed to be a national general strike in sympathy with the Palestinians killed in Hebron in Israel. Most of Beirut is taking part, but there will be fewer shops and businesses shut in the Christian East than elsewhere. Because there are fewer people than usual I get my chance with the ruler. Its owner sits down briefly with me for a cup of strong Arabic coffee.

'In October 1992 a National Fund and a Ministry for the Displaced were created. Walid Jumblatt (the Druze leader) is now the Minister. It followed a big meeting in June, attended by everyone who was anyone, called the National Congress for Displaced People. To date the Fund has had twelve million dollars – five of which have come from private sources.

'But we are talking about 90,000 families still displaced. That means 450,000 people. There are also huge numbers who have gone abroad. At least half of those remaining are 'urgent cases' – families living in appalling and illegal conditions. All need to be rehoused. We can help them to repair their old homes – if they can go back. Or we can help them build new homes if their old ones have been destroyed. This means clearing the ruins and the debris, then setting up the infrastructure without which people won't go home. So electricity, water, sewerage, roads and also schools are crucial. So is employment.

'There is no work outside the main cities. Half the population of Lebanon comes to Beirut every day. Everything is centred on Beirut. People we have resettled in their villages are having to leave again to find work. So we are not only dealing with those who have left their homes long ago and want to return. We also have the problem of those who have returned to their homes and have to come back to Beirut.' An additional problem is that bombing is still going on. In July 1993, refugees fleeing from the Israelis in the south swamped Beirut.

It is easier to call from one side of Beirut to the other via New York than to get through on the rickety and unreliable public system.

Kamal Feghali knows what he is talking about. His office surveyed some 67,000 families throughout the country. 52 per cent had had their homes totally destroyed, while 27 per cent had homes which were partially destroyed. Forty per cent of the families were illegally occupying their current home, and 12 per cent were living in ruined offices, hotels or shops. Many of the displaced families were having to make do with extremely cramped, overcrowded and insanitary conditions.

At this point Kamal Feghali drains his cold coffee and stands up. The ruler swings again. 'What I would really like to be able to do is to get former enemies together and reconcile them. Shall I tell you a story? The other week, in this very office, I had people from a mountain village here. The village had been almost totally destroyed and they wanted to go back and rebuild. The only problem was that the village had for years been a mixed one, Christians and Muslims. When the war started it was split down the middle. Neighbour fought neighbour, friend attacked friend.

'So anyway, there they all were, the representatives of the different groups, different families. The Christians sat here,' – the ruler waves towards the large black leather sofa that I am sitting on – 'the

Muslims there,' – the ruler swings round to the other side of the room. 'They faced each other, glaring. "So what is the problem?" I asked. One old man pointed a quivering finger. "He killed my cow." The accused stood up in indignation. "Well, you hit my mother! You made her kneel down in front of you and you hit her!" The accusations and insults flew. "It wasn't me – ask her." An old woman in black peered short-sightedly across the room. "No, it is true, it wasn't him. It was his cousin." It took a long time but eventually apologies also made their way across the room and they all stood up and shook hands.'

Kamal Feghali had obviously been pleased with this particular day's work. But he can do all-too-little of it. The range of other needs is too pressing, the money too little, the task herculean. Everyone in the room has reason to praise him. And the praise is not just the adulation of sycophants. 'He really cares about people. He is different from others in power. And he has done many good things,' says a young Christian woman who has come to get him to sign a paper which will convince the authorities to release money owing to her. Kamal Feghali's signature is worth a lot.

Meanwhile the man himself is joking with someone who has just entered in a wheelchair. Not only is he disabled, he also has nowhere to live. His visit to the offices is becoming a daily occurrence; his problem is intractable. They both launch into a complicated story about another disabled man who finally shot the man who had disabled him. With a characteristic wry smile Kamal Feghali turns back to me. 'We have to avoid making the same mistakes that we made in the past. Who knows, perhaps one day I will be called as the 'expert' on the displaced to somewhere like Bosnia.' In the meantime, he has plenty to do here. ■

The measure of hope

People are returning to the homes they left during the war, but it's hard work putting the pieces back together again.

The scene is peaceful, rolling countryside dotted with tiny white villages. It was almost ten years since I had last been here, helping to take essential provisions to those who still remained. Then most had fled. Now they are coming back. The gardens which had been so neatly tended are wild and neglected. But everywhere there are trucks piled with planks of wood or window-frames. Whole families have taken the chance of a day's holiday to come back and rebuild the houses they left so long ago. Some of the younger ones have never been here before.

We drive as far as we can, right up to a road so overgrown it looks like a footpath. Barbed wire blocks our way. My friend speaks for the first time in a while, her voice clipped: 'That's Lahd country, the South Lebanon Army; you can just see their outpost on the mountain. Few people are allowed in or out – the Israelis control it all. Let's go back now.'

We drive to see a family who have agreed to speak to me. Their house must have been large once; there is a huge reception area that they have been unable to repair because one whole wall is unsafe, so we go in the back door and sit in a small blue-painted room with pictures of the Virgin Mary on the wall and a black cast iron fire in the centre. They want no photos and no names and are jumpy when I take my camera out on their roof – the eyes of the Israelis can see a long way and exact their retribution in Lahd bullets.

Once inside the house we sip strong coffee in small cups while they tell their story. The uncle, who is slowly rebuilding his house nearby brick by brick, speaks first and fiercely: 'We were the last to leave. It was the middle of the night, and our neighbours came and knocked on our door, shouting urgently that we had to go; we could hear guns very close. We left with nothing. If we'd been able to take things with us we would have been all right. But we left with nothing and now we've come back with nothing. We thought we'd be gone a few weeks or months. It has been ten years now.'

His sister interjects: 'We came back to start working on the house three years ago, as soon as the peace was announced. My husband came first, in July 1991. He didn't recognise our home at first – earth was piled from the ground to the roof to make a barrage. Everything, everything had been stolen, pillaged. The inside was a wreck. It has been a lot of work to rebuild; sometimes I think it is more difficult to rebuild than to start from scratch. We have had money from different sources . But it is still less than half what we really need to rebuild.'

I marvel at their determination. 'We will continue, though, even if the money dries up. We will stay in a chicken shed if necessary. We will stay whatever happens.' 'Yes.' adds another member of the family. 'This is the measure of our hope. We have borrowed money to come back.' The indomitable uncle has the final word before I am ushered out: 'It is our country, our land. If people had faith in the country there would not have been war. I want to die here, in the land of my ancestors.'

As we travel back through the hills I learn the whole story. The husband was killed by a shell last October. Two brothers have also died during the war. It is this too which must inform the family's determination to stay and to make a new life: like so many Lebanese, they have little more to lose. We stop on the way to look at a school which will soon be re-opened. A solitary man is digging his garden and already his little patch is green with healthy vegetables.

CHRIS STOWERS / PANOS

Precarious prospects in a South Lebanon village.

Nikki van der Gaag

BEIRUT – THE FACTS

Beirut is Lebanon in a nutshell. One-third of the population of the country lives in the capital, and 800,000 more commute in every day. Today, it is Lebanon's showpiece, its shopfront, where most of the post-war rebuilding is being concentrated.[1]

NOW

THE ECONOMY

Between 1990 and 1992:

- Industrial exports increased from $190 million to $420 million
- Construction permits increased from 2,180 to 10,745
- Passengers passing through Beirut airport have increased from 709,000 to 1,043,000
- Electricity production increased from 1,394 to 4,033 million kilowatts
- The number of ships coming to Beirut's port increased from 671 to 3,054
- Horizon 2000 is a ten-year plan for rebuilding Lebanon which will cost $29 billion

THE PEOPLE

- 90,000 families are still internal refugees; several hundred thousand are still living abroad
- A minimum of 350,000 Palestinians have no hope of citizenship either in Lebanon or in a new Palestinian state
- Unemployment has risen from 5.5% before the war to 35% today
- Private income: the richest fifth of the population receive 55% of [4] private income while the poorest fifth receive only 4%

EDUCATION

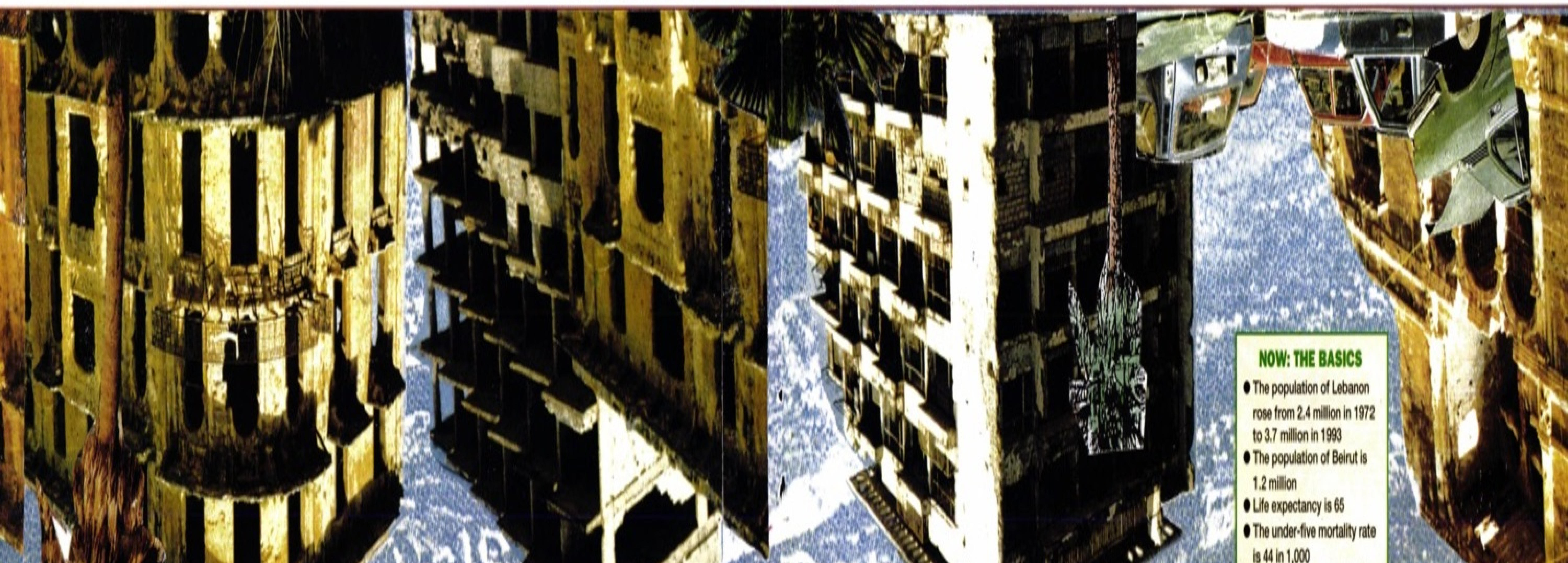
- Teachers went on strike this year to protest about the Government's strategy on wages
- Literacy: because they missed out on education during the war, 382,300 people, or 20% of the population aged 20 and above are illiterate [3]
- Government schools are under-funded. There are not enough state schools to cater for the whole school population
- The gap is sometimes filled by confessional groups; many children would not go to school if it were not for privately-funded Islamic education

ENVIRONMENT

- The Government has set up a Ministry for the Environment – but this is still very weak and a range of new legislation is needed
- The water table and most of the natural springs have been polluted – large numbers of illegal wells were dug during the war
- Solid and also toxic waste has been dumped into the sea
- Air pollution in Beirut is among the highest in the world
- Deforestation – including the mountain cedars which are the Lebanon's national emblem – has left only 3% of the country forested, compared with 18% in the 1950s, though reforestation is now beginning
- Improper use of fertilizers has rendered some previously fertile areas of the Beq'aa valley infertile due to soil salination

Banqu di
RIVIERA

AND DURING THE WAR...



THE PEOPLE

At least 360,000 people (14% of the population) had at least one member of their family killed, wounded or kidnapped during the war:

- Dead 125,000
- Wounded 250,000
- Missing 17,4152 [2]
- Internal refugees: 1.46 million – more than half the population – between 1975 and 1987
- Migration: 637,254 people, mostly professionals or skilled labourers, left the country between 1975 and 1987. Nearly one-quarter of all Lebanese were abroad at some point during the war
- 180,000 household units were destroyed during the war, and as many were seriously damaged

THE ECONOMY

- The budget deficit rose from 21.8% in 1975 to 81.1% in 1986
- In 1980 one US$ bought 3.4 Lebanese pounds. In 1992 this had increased to 1,730 pounds to the $
- Gross Domestic Product declined from 8.1 billion Lebanese pounds in 1974 to 3.8 billion in 1986
- Income per head of the population fell from $1,869 in 1974 to $979 in 1985
- Inflation rose from 23.7% in 1980 to 620% in 1987

EDUCATION

- There was not a single year during the war in which most schools did not have to close due to fighting and shelling – many acted as refugee centres for long periods
- To ensure that pupils covered the basic subjects during these closures, those considered less important, like art, history, geography and sport were skipped
- In 1982 50% of schools were private – today these are too expensive for the majority of the population
- Universities split and catered for different confessions; courses with any 'political' content had to be taught in Cyprus

NOW: THE BASICS

- The population of Lebanon rose from 2.4 million in 1972 to 3.7 million in 1993
- The population of Beirut is 1.2 million
- Life expectancy is 65
- The under-five mortality rate is 44 in 1,000
- The total land area is similar to that of Wales
- The main language is Arabic
- The dominant religions are Christianity (mainly Maronite) and Islam – Shi'a Sunni and Druze

Notes: 1. All information either from authors of articles, or from Theodor Hanf *Coexistence in wartime Lebanon*, Centre for Lebanese Studies/IB Tauris 1993, except where otherwise indicated. 2. Beirut Police Department, quoted in *The Guardian* 11.3.92. 3. Quoted in the Ecumenical Popular Education Newsletter, February 1994.

No place like home

The world's media are heralding a new era for Palestinians. But, as ***Nikki van der Gaag*** *explains, Palestinians in Beirut are faced with new threats instead.*

YAN MORVAN / REX FEATURES

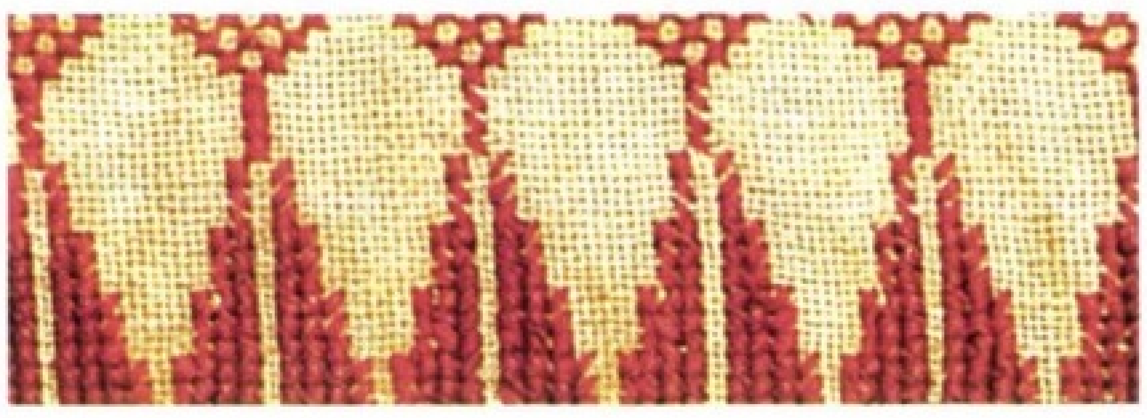
MIRIAM was 16 years old when her home was razed to the ground in 1976. Many of her neighbours and friends were slaughtered and she herself was injured. Her family survived but had no food, water or shelter. They were moved to a house which had been shelled and had no doors or windows. They were given food. They put plastic on the windows to keep out the cold and the rain, and made the place their home for six years, until advancing Israeli tanks and shells forced them to flee once more...

Miriam's crime? She is a Palestinian in Beirut. Her home in 1976 was in Tel-el-Zaater – a name which still strikes fear into Palestinians hearts – when Christian right-wing militias massacred 2,500 men women and children. Today she lives in Shatila, in the camp where a similar massacre occurred in 1982 – this time under cover of invading Israeli troops.

Today, at last, the war has ended. The militias are disarmed, the Israelis have withdrawn – at least from Beirut and its environs – and Palestinians in Gaza and Jericho have autonomy. Palestinians in Beirut should finally be safe. It should be time for people like Miriam to be able to feel some measure of security.

But the Government of Lebanon has other plans. Palestinians are no longer welcome in the new-style Beirut. Lebanon's Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz has made it plain that Lebanon wants its Palestinian refugees to leave.

This is easier said than done. Palestinians have been in Lebanon since 1948, when the creation of the State of Israel forced them to flee north. The international community created UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Committee) to provide for the needs of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt. The refugees were given tents and later they were allowed to build camps on the outskirts of the major Lebanese towns. Registered refugees were entitled to education, health and other benefits – though the unregistered refugees who came after the lists were closed in the early 1950s have always been non-statistics, making it very difficult to know exactly how many Palestinians there are in Lebanon.



Over half the registered Palestinians still live in such camps, in crowded and often unsanitary conditions, vulnerable to any opponent. They have had many such opponents over the years – the Israelis and the right-wing Christian militias who carried out the massacres in Tel-el-Zaater in 1976 and in Sabra and Shatila in 1982. Shatila and Sabra were virtually flattened during the long-drawn-out siege by the Shi'ite Amal militia in 1985. Both camps have been shelled and then rebuilt more times than most people can count.

But now they are to be pulled down permanently to make way for a huge sports stadium. It will replace the old Sports City, destroyed during the 1982 Israeli invasion. The Saudi Government has promised $20 million for the project.

So where are the inhabitants of the Beirut camps – some 50,000 people – and the other 300,000-odd Palestinians in Lebanon to go? Some might be able to go to the new Gaza-Jericho state, says Buwayz, others to whichever countries will have them – Denmark, perhaps? At present Libya is the only country accepting Palestinians and most other countries are tightening up on immigration. The rest will have to go to other places in Lebanon. They must leave Beirut. The Government is quite clear about this. Shabby Palestinian camps have no place in the rebuilt city with its elegant shops and wide walkways. Maybe they could go to the Beq'aa. They can't go south – it was the Palestinian presence there that caused the Israeli attacks in the first place. The latest idea is that they might be able to build on land still owned by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

Palestinians themselves are sceptical. Difficult as their situation is, most have lived all their lives in Beirut and have no desire to uproot themselves once again. By January this year people in Shatila had started to repair the damage caused by the war. Work to repair water pipes, sewerage, electricity and roads had begun. People were rebuilding their damaged homes, some helped by grants of $5,000 from the Central Fund for the Displaced.

Then Hariri ordered all reconstruction to stop. When I went to Shatila in March I saw many of the breeze-block houses in a half-constructed state, some with the scaffolding still erected. One house was swarming with workmen in defiance of the ban. But there was no electricity and the drainage systems were still in a parlous state. The narrow alley-ways that interlace the camp had been flooded by rain the day before and we had to pick our way through the mud. When it rains hard they are virtually impassable.

I was visiting a vocational training centre where young people were learning skills – typing, computers, hairdressing, English. Kids who had missed out on their education because of the war were being helped to catch up. The place had a busy hum about it.

There was good reason for this. Learning such skills is an economic necessity; Palestinians are virtually banned from any skilled employment and so have to try and eke out a living in the camps. With high inflation and funds from the PLO and UNRWA drying up, many families face real financial hardship. In Miriam's family only she and her brother are working. They have to support parents, brothers, sisters and other assorted relatives. Her father is sick. But she feels that they are lucky in comparison with most other Palestinians in Shatila.

In the past, many Palestinians went to work or study overseas. Almost every family I knew had someone abroad. But the Gulf is now out-of-bounds because of the decision by the Palestinian national leadership to support Saddam Hussein, and grants – which were mostly study grants for former Eastern bloc countries – have dried up. In any case, those who do leave are now in danger of losing their residence rights in Lebanon. Some 20,000 Palestinians with other passports have been taken off the Lebanese lists – another way of making them 'disappear'.

So what of the hopes that Palestinians had for a state of their own? Palestinians in Lebanon have suffered more than most in the struggle for Palestinian self-determination and national independence. They did so in the belief that one day they would return to their orchards and villages in Palestine. Over 10,000 have been killed, three camps destroyed and four camps badly damaged. Yet old ladies still keep the keys to the homes they left almost half a century ago, and young people are brought up to believe that their real homes are in Haifa or Galilee. Many of the camps are still organized into areas which correspond to the original villages from which people came.

So when the Palestine National Council, their Parliament in exile, proclaimed a Palestinian state on 15 November 1988 and called for a UN-sponsored peace confer-

What next for the people of Shatila – fading flowers record the dead, water is collected for the living (left and below).

LENA KARA / REX FEATURES

ence, Palestinians in Lebanon thought the time might finally have come to go home.

It was not to be. The Palestinian leadership made a number of concessions that led eventually to the setting up of the Gaza-Jericho state. Jericho is a small city; Gaza is the most densely-populated place in the world. There is precious little room for those already there, let alone for those from outside.

Palestinians I met were extremely concerned about this and about the precariousness of their situation in Lebanon. All of them had lived in hope that some day there would be change for the better. But few could see a way out of this latest dilemma. They are also feeling the pinch economically. As Miriam put it: 'Even the war was better than this. A bomb can kill someone but if we have no money and no food lots of people will die.' She has her bags already packed in case the family has to leave once more.

There are still some obstacles in the way before this happens. The UN would protest at such drastic measures. The Lebanese Parliament would have to participate in the decision and influential people there have already voiced their opposition; people like Walid Jumblatt, Minister for the Displaced, and Nabih Berri, Speaker of Parliament. Hariri himself seems to be behind the drive to get Palestinians out of Beirut, but may be less influential on this matter – as on others – because his popularity is on the wane. And Palestinian leaders say that despite their difficult situation, people will resist the demolition of the camps – just as they have resisted all manner of abuses in the past. ■

The decorative embroideries are typically Palestinian taken from *Palestinian Embroidery* by Shelagh Weir and Serene Shahid (British Museum Publications 1988).

Singing in Shatila

Rosemary Sayigh interviews **Umm Rajab**, who lives in a small room in the camp on the outskirts of Beirut.

Umm Rajab is one of many Palestinians in Beirut who have no near family. A son somewhere in Eastern Europe is 'good' (in camp language this means that he occasionally sends his mother money). She has two married daughters in Jordan but hasn't been able to see them for 24 years. Hunched by rheumatism, wounded during the Amal sieges between 1985 and 1987, Umm Rajab moves around the four square meters of her home by holding on to bits of furniture. Like other Palestinian women of her generation, she has had a life full of loss and hardship. She was widowed by the age of 30 and three out of her four sons are now dead. Besides rheumatism she has heart problems. Neighbours do her shopping. Abu Muhammad, a neighbouring shop-keeper, brings her a couple of gallons of water from a street tap.

The doorway is the only source of light. Public electricity hasn't been restored to Shatila camp since the battles of the mid-1980s. The people of Shatila say that the Government is withholding electricity because 'to give light to the camp would be to approve of its existence'. This connection was underlined in a meeting between Lebanon's current Prime Minister Hariri and Palestinian leaders in late February this year, when the Prime Minister warned them that Shatila would have to go – it was an eyesore which would not be tolerated in the new Lebanon.

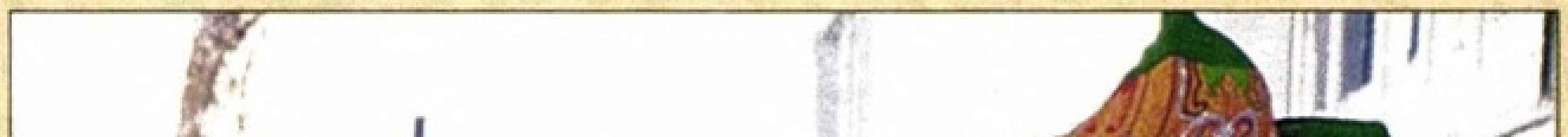
Umm Rajab talks readily about her life before 1948. She lived in a village near Jaffa, inside the current borders of Israel. Village women worked hard outside and inside the house. But she remembers with great pleasure outings to Jaffa and picnics by the sea. She gives me a list of recipes of special foods village women used to cook for Ramadan. In 1948 war drove her family to a refugee camp on the West Bank and then in 1970 to Lebanon. She has been in Shatila ever since.

When another neighbour, Umm Subhi, visits with shopping from the market we talk about weddings and wedding songs. Umm Rajab doesn't remember the songs of her village, but Umm Subhi comes from Majd al-Kroom, whose people have kept up their customs for over 40 years of exile. I ask her to sing. She apologises, saying that as it's Ramadan and she is neither eating nor drinking during the day, her throat is too dry to sing. Umm Rajab's curiosity is aroused, however. Sharp as a sparrow, accustomed – like many old people here – to getting her own way, she presses and urges the other woman to sing. Umm Subhi yields with good grace and gives us a few Majd al-Kroom trills.

In the camps people still mostly follow the old customs of neighbourly solidarity. There are sayings that re-affirm this such as: 'Joy is for all, and mourning is for all'; 'The neighbour who is near is more important than the brother who is far'; 'No-one should sit down to eat if his neighbour is starving'. I've heard stories of people who, during the sieges, shared their last grams of milk powder or tea with neighbours.

Yet camps are seen as 'slums' by the Lebanese Government and current plans for post-war reconstruction threaten many of them with partial or complete dismantlement.

Palestinians in Lebanon face an unknown future as pressures on them to migrate increase. As someone who entered the country after the official refugee registrations in the early 1950s, Umm Rajab doesn't have residence rights in Lebanon. She hopes to be reunited with her children either in Gaza/Jericho or in Jordan, but if and when depends on how a final settlement works out. Others here, the exiles of 1948, who have never known any 'home' but Lebanon, face an even greater degree of uncertainty. They have no papers to leave the country – even if they have the money to do so – and nowhere to live but the camps. With no clear provisions for Palestinians in exile the current precarious agreement between Israel and the PLO has intensified their insecurity.



Still not crushed, the hopes of Palestinians survive the destruction of their camps.

LENA KARA / REX FEATURES

Rosemary Sayigh lives in Beirut and has written extensively on the Palestinian issue, including most recently *Too Many Enemies: The Palestinian Experience in Lebanon*, (Zed Books London 1994).

We need war

*In Lebanon, perceptions are as important as facts. Christians today feel threatened and many are leaving the country. **Tony Fadoul** is 27 years old, a Christian and an ex-militiaman who still prefers war to peace. **Chris Martin** talks to him to find out why.*

We are a Christian Maronite family. We lived in a small village in the north of Lebanon until 1980. We left because of the threat from Syrian soldiers who had come to the country in 1976. It was not a direct physical threat but we felt constantly intimidated by them. My mother felt scared that something would happen to us if we stayed, so we moved to a Christian area not occupied by the Syrians.

Nearly all of my family were involved with the old Phalange Party. Both my uncle and father were members so I was exposed to it from a very early age. I always knew that I might join and always felt that to be a part of the Lebanese Forces – which began as the military wing of the Phalange Party– was an honourable thing. They were fighting for us Christians and I don't see anyone else who will look out for us.

I had been out on small missions with older guys for quite a while but I became a full-time member in 1987 when I was 20 years old. They gave me a uniform, a gun, my own jeep and responsibility for about 15 people. We were paid around $60 a month and given free medical insurance. Some people did it for the money but most genuinely believed in what they were fighting for. I was studying at university at the time and was being supported by my parents so I didn't need the money at all. I wasn't alone in being a university student either. I would say that as many as 15 per cent of the students were involved with the militia.

I saw some terrible things while I was serving. We were stationed at a road-block and there would often be shootings there. I have been ordered to shoot people and I've done it. We didn't have to accept the orders of the commanders but we nearly always did. It might be hard for you to understand but we believed in what we were doing. Some people were chicken and ran away but they were few.

For the most part though the tasks were less dramatic – guarding checkpoints and waving cars through, basic security things. You have to remember that there was no government then and someone had to police our streets and look after people, keep law and order. That's what we did, protect our own people.

I left the militia in 1991 and I've been lucky, getting a good job in a firm that pays me $600 a month. Actually, I haven't really left. It's more that I've stopped taking an active part since the war ended in 1991. I still believe in the Lebanese Forces and would gladly go back and fight for them if they asked me to. I feel no guilt about fighting for them. Not at all. I am proud of what I have done. I regret the fact that the Lebanese Forces are not operational now.

Part of this comes from the sense of identity that you feel when you're with the militia. It affected my life in many ways, almost like being in a family. When you are with people and you are being bombed you learn about them and get a special feeling of sharing and caring for those who share your beliefs. There was a sense of purpose in those days, having a commander to follow, feeling that you were doing something for your people that was respected. I feel lost without that identity.

It's not just for me personally, though. I believe in the Christian cause in Lebanon and that the Lebanese Forces are the only way that we can rule the country. The situation now is a disaster; I hate it. I'm living in a country that doesn't belong to me any more.

You might think I'm extreme in saying this but talk to others and you find they hold the same views. I'm just a normal guy. I've got a decent job, a girlfriend, I live with my family and I don't break any laws. I want to have children like anyone else but I want them to be secure in a Christian Lebanon.

What will happen when Hariri goes? Can we really expect the Syrians to look after our interests? I believe that we have to be strong as Christians and that the Lebanese Forces are the only way we will be. It's not that I want war for war's sake but right now I genuinely believe we need a war in Lebanon. It's better to die standing up than sitting down. ■

Belief in the bullet: Christian Phalangist on guard in Beirut.

GYSEMBERGH / CAMERA PRESS

Simply... a history of Beirut and Lebanon

1 PATCHWORK

Flourishing Phoenician city-states along the Eastern Mediterranean coast dominate the trade of the ancient world before 1000 BC. In the centuries that follow the area is conquered by the Persians, by Alexander the Great and by the Romans. Ancient ruins throughout the area attest to all these different periods. During these times different religious, political and ethnic groups live side by side, sometimes peaceably, sometimes not. The area is still under Roman rule when the Prophet Mohammed begins teaching Islam in 610 AD. From 634 AD various Khalifs rule, culminating in the Ottoman state. By the 11th century AD most of the communities that live there today have already settled in the area.

2 OTTOMAN RULE

In 1516 the Ottomans take over. They are to rule for four centuries until 1918. Ottoman rule is based on economics; Christians and Jews – 'People of the Book' – have to recognize Islamic rule but are allowed to practice their own religions. They are freed from conscription but have to pay poll tax. Rulers are more interested in tax revenues than converts.

The local tax-farmers become the powerful families of their area. Many of these families still dominate politics today. Beirut becomes increasingly important, growing from 6,000 inhabitants at the beginning of the century to 46,000 by 1861.

From 1860 onwards there are repeated clashes between feudal landlords and peasants and between the different groups. In 1860 Druze Muslims massacre Christians.

3 FRENCH MANDATE

The Western Powers gain influence from 1840 onwards. Following the defeat of Turkey in the 1914-1918 war and the break-up of the Ottoman Empire, the French occupy Lebanon and Syria and obtain a League of Nations mandate to govern them (as does Britain in Palestine). 'Greater Lebanon' is created by attaching neighbouring districts which had been part of the former Ottoman provinces of Beirut and Damascus. Many Muslims at first refuse to accept the designation 'Lebanese', wanting to remain attached to the Syrian hinterland and seeing the new country as Western- and Christian-orientated. In 1926 the Lebanese Republic is formed and a constitution drawn up – much of which is still in force today. It expressly forbids any of the new country's territory from being relinquished. Co-existence between the different groups is built into the constitution.

4 INDEPENDENCE

In 1943 Parliament reaffirms the independence of the country. France responds by imprisoning President al-Khoury, Prime Minister Riad Solh and three cabinet ministers. There is a general strike and an uprising. Under pressure from the British and American Governments, France backs down. A new flag with a green cedar tree in the middle replaces the French tricolour.

Amid rejoicing from all groups the Lebanese National Pact is formed. It is a compromise. The Christians renounce the protection of Western powers and the Muslims renounce union with Syria or other Arab states. In intra-Arab conflicts Lebanon will remain neutral.

In 1948 the State of Israel is created, causing an influx of Palestinians into southern Lebanon.

5 CIVIL WAR

The first outbreak of war in Lebanon begins in 1958. The Lebanese people respond to the pan-Arab call of Nasser, the Egyptian President. The US intervenes for the first time, replacing Camille

Chamoun by General Chehab as President. In 1975 the second civil war breaks out between the Christian-Maronite Lebanese Forces and the National Movement backed by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Massacres ensue, notably of the Palestinian inhabitants of Tel-al-Zaater and Karantina by the Christians and of the Christian inhabitants of Damour by the Palestinians. In 1976 Syria is requested to help resolve the crisis and responds by occupying all but the far south of the country. In 1978 the Israeli army invades southern Lebanon after PLO raids into Israel. UNIFIL, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, is sent in to keep the peace. Israel forms a proxy militia in the south of the country. The Syrian army shells Christians in East Beirut.

6 ISRAELI INVASION

On 6 June 1982 the Israelis invade Lebanon, marching as far as Beirut in three days and putting the city under siege for three months. PLO troops are evacuated from Beirut under the supervision of a multinational force. Lebanese Christian President-elect Bashir Gemayel is murdered. Under Israeli cover, Christians massacre Palestinian civilians in the camps of Sabra and Shatila. Many strategic foreign buildings are suicide-bombed, including the Israeli military headquarters in Tyre, the US Embassy and the French military headquarters in Beirut. Lebanese and Israeli Governments agree on the terms of Israeli withdrawal on condition that the Syrian army also leaves. Syria refuses to withdraw. US warships shell Muslim and Druze areas of Lebanon. In 1984 President Pierre Gemayel visits President Assad in Damascus to reiterate his demand for Syrian withdrawal. The same year hostage-taking begins, including several Westerners. In 1985 the Israelis withdraw from Sidon and begin their 'iron fist' policy of repression in southern Lebanon. The Shi'a Amal militia tries to subjugate the Palestinians by besieging their camps in Beirut.

7 AGREEMENT

The failure of the Lebanese Parliament to elect a new President leads to the setting up of rival governments in West and East Beirut. Outgoing President Amin Gemayel appoints Army Chief of Staff General Michel Aoun as interim Prime Minister. Aoun declares war on the Syrian army in Lebanon. East Beirut comes under siege from Syria and its allies. In 1989 all parties agree to a peace negotiated at a meeting of leaders in Taif, Saudi Arabia. The Taif agreement reasserts the belief in a state where the different confessions will co-exist. It gives increased powers to the Prime Minister and fewer powers to the President. The results of the conference have broad international approval but encounter domestic opposition. The first President, Rene Mowad, is assassinated after only a short time in office and replaced by Elias Hrawi. Fighting continues, especially between Christian groups.

8 PEACE AND PROMISES

The Gulf War brings a rapprochement between Syria and the US. Syrians move in on Aoun and defeat him. Parliament convenes and with Syrian backing dismantles the structures of war, including the Green Line dividing East and West Beirut. After some struggle the main militias (including the Palestinians but not Hizbollah, the Islamic group) are disarmed. By 1991 the rule of the large militias is over. But the economic situation goes from bad to worse, leading to a general strike on 6 May and the resignation of Prime Minister Karami. A poor turnout at the general elections in 1992 is due mainly to a boycott by the opposition – particularly the Christians – in protest against the doctoring by Parliament of electoral law and because elections under conditions of total occupation cannot be free and fair. The main benefactors from this are the more radical Shi'a Muslim parties, including the Hizbollah, which gains seats in Parliament. Rafic Hariri, billionaire and patron of various causes, is appointed Prime Minister and promises new buildings, new jobs and a new Lebanon.

ILLUSTRATION: MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY; ISRAELI TANKS: C. STEELE-PERKINS / MAGNUM

Difficult days for the **Party** of **God**

Hizbollah, or the 'Party of God', is best known for its violent opposition to Israel and the West. Changing realities in the Middle East means it now faces some hard decisions about the future. ***Darius Bazargan*** *investigates.*

THERE is a company in Beirut which supplies J & B whisky and the American-manufactured sportswear Hanes. Last year it received an urgent order from Hizbollah for some 200,000 black T-shirts. The goods were air-freighted in directly from the US, the account was settled in dollars. Five days later the shirts were on the backs of their new owners, who were marching through West Beirut demanding the overthrow of American imperialism.

This sartorial expediency makes for an amusing anecdote. It also raises the possibility that Hizbollah's political agenda is a more complex proposition than one might expect, given the militant absolutist rhetoric of the movement's clerical leadership. Hizbollah today is led by young, apparently intelligent men who are as well acquainted with the machinations of political realism as they are with the Qu'ran.

When Israel invaded in 1982 the Shi'a were at once the largest and the most politically – and economically – marginalized community in Lebanon. Their political awakening began with the activities of the cleric Musa Sadr. The Iranian revolution also raised expectations. To some extent these were met by Amal, an organization which sought to better the Shi'a position within a multi-confessional Lebanese state. Others regarded this as a sell-out and a year later the movement split.

Simultaneously Teheran, which foresaw strategic opportunities in supporting its co-religionists, dispatched a contingent of Revolutionary Guards to Lebanon ostensibly to resist Israeli aggression. They played a major role in organizing, funding and training a plethora of disaffected Amal supporters and like-minded groups that came to be organized under an umbrella structure known as the Party of God – or Hizbollah.

However, it would be a mistake to view the organization merely as acolytes of Iranian foreign policy. Although Iran pays the lion's share of its financial needs, Hizbollah has invariably existed on Syrian sufferance. Similarly, the various groups within Hizbollah have always had considerable autonomy in tactical, if not strategic decision-making. It may have been kick-started with foreign capital and assistance, but Hizbollah has grown Lebanese roots and seems to correspond to a genuine social need among a section of the indigenous population that see it representing some of their aspirations. Hizbollah and its main constituency, the peasantry and urban lower middle-class Shi'a, have lacked the traditional means of access to the Lebanese state – strong clan backing and relative wealth.

Throughout the 1980s Hizbollah firmly followed the Khomeini line. Its proclaimed ambition was nothing less than an Islamic republic in Lebanon and the complete physical destruction of the Israeli state. For the poor Shi'a these aims were attractive and uncontroversial. They were flags around which the nascent organization could mobilize the popular support and energy of many thousands of effectively disenfranchized people. Viewed in this light many of Hizbollah's goals are more idealistic than real: people may sincerely desire them but few would actually expect them to come about. The rhetoric of Hizbollah has always been the language of

CHRIS STOWERS / PANOS

All dressed up but which way to go?: Hizbollah's glory days are fading fast.

politics, and as such one should be wary of taking it at face value.

Today, Hizbollah's future appears uncertain; its glory days seem to be fading fast. Any peace settlement between Israel, Lebanon and Syria would spell an end to the resistance war upon which the organization's popularity and credibility were initially built. Recent devastating Israeli attacks have underscored the fact that Hizbollah is never going to take its war of liberation to Jerusalem. Its continued existence is mainly due to the Syrians, who see it as a useful card to play as Damascus haggles over the price of peace in the region.

The only viable long-term option for the movement's survival is to penetrate the Lebanese state machinery, a process which has already started and some would say has always been going on. Despite its rejection of the Taif accords which ended the civil war and allowed elections to take place, Hizbollah ran for Parliament on the 'advice' of both Iran and Syria. Not previously noted for its democratic acumen, the organization reaped the benefits of its substantial social welfare programmes. All eight of the fielded candidates gained seats.

Another result of this new course was the possibility of a schism between those who have accepted the new realities and the rejectionists. Some reports suggested that a new, more radical splinter faction called *Ansarallah* – Partisans of God – might form in opposition to the relatively conciliatory stance being adopted by the present leadership. This didn't occur in the wake of the elections, but is a real possibility should Hizbollah move towards acceptance of the American-sponsored peace process.

Barring disintegration, Hizbollah has two real choices. It can, literally, stick to its guns, pray that the peace process fails and reject the outcome if it doesn't. This would very possibly involve a direct military confrontation with Syria and result in the physical destruction of the organization as both a military and political force. Hizbollah would stand alone in such a showdown, as the Iranian government would not countenance behaviour likely to jeopardize its own protracted strategic alliance with Damascus.

Alternatively Hizbollah can continue to make inroads into mainstream Lebanese politics, which will leave it competing with Amal as the defender of social justice for the Shi'a. Neither the peace process, which is about strategic agreements between governments, nor Prime Minister Hariri's grandiose reconstruction schemes look likely to deliver any tangible material benefits to the country's poor in the near future; so Hizbollah is likely to continue to have a significant role to play. ■

Darius Bazargan is a freelance writer specializing in the Middle East.

ABBAS / MAGNUM

Fishing for a future in the Beirut filth.

Milk, honey & muck

The polluted atmosphere of Beirut is just one symptom of an environmental malaise. ***Mohammed Khawlie*** *diagnoses the problems and prescribes the measures needed to cure them.*

WHEN I take my one-year-old daughter Elissa for her daily walk through the streets of Beirut I often wonder what she is inhaling. I worry about how much it will affect her immediate health – not to mention her growth into a fit and happy child and teenager.

More and more of our children are falling ill – how much is pollution responsible? The figures speak for themselves. The worst problems are undoubtedly in Beirut. Half of the 800,000 private cars in Lebanon are in Beirut. During the day the population in Beirut and suburbs approaches two million as people commute in by car or public taxi in the absence of any bus services. Thousands of private electricity generators kick into action every day when the main electricity supply cuts out yet again.

Just 30 years ago Beirutis used to have ten lovely bays carpeted with golden sand to enjoy. Now the once-beautiful pockets of sandy beaches and rocky protrusions are on the verge of obliteration. You either have to pay a lump sum to dip into the sea at one of the many concrete resorts, or drive out of the city a considerable distance to find an unpolluted beach.

Preliminary attempts to find out the acidity of the rain (as yet there is no systematic monitoring of air pollution) showed it to be well above normal. Estimates of current emissions into the air indicate increases ranging between 8 and 42 times the rate 20 years ago. This means emitting about 260,000 tons of sulphur dioxide and about two million tons each of dust, carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons annually... and Lebanon is among the smallest countries in the world.

Environmental deterioration is not just the result of so many years of war, although the war certainly made conditions worse. Lebanon's environmental concerns are pretty much those of other developing countries and stem from poverty – high fertility rates in poor communities lacking proper nutrition and clean drinking water. Lebanon also 'enjoys' some of the environmental problems faced by developed countries: physical deterioration of the coastline, various kinds of pollution on land, sea and air – traffic being one important factor – and energy-related issues, especially from thermal power stations.

Facing these problems is not easy. I do not expect that environmental deterioration in Lebanon will be solved overnight. In the past Lebanon was known as the 'land of milk and honey'. The 'milk' came from the snow-covered mountain peaks; the 'honey' from the fragrant woods. Both are under threat. To stop the environmental degradation Lebanon needs more than fair words or money. It needs a miracle.

This miracle can only be effected in small, practical ways. Environmental legislation must be updated and upgraded. Laws which already exist must be enforced. The one Parliamentary Committee responsible among other things for environmental issues, is simply responding to issues as they become 'hot': for example, declaring three islands and an ancient forest in north Lebanon 'protected areas'.

At least a Ministry of the Environment has been set up. It still has bare offices and minimal staff but it has taken a number of steps in the right direction. In Beirut it has re-activated a solid-waste incineration plan and is trying to revitalize an existing compost plant. Between them they can handle 840 tons of waste a year. The Ministry has updated legislation to prevent the removal of beach sand and to control rock-quarrying. Hunting has been banned for three years starting from 1995 – Lebanon's birds as well as its people were victims of the war. Cement, asbestos and fertilizer factories, especially in the Chekka area, are being routinely checked. The German Government has promised to send mobile laboratories for detecting and monitoring air pollution. Schools are supposed to be introduced to environmental education to ensure that children are aware of the problems that their parents ignored.

All this is a start, at least on paper. But many measures have only been half-heartedly implemented. Environmental education is still in most cases a cipher rather than a reality; the legislation on beach sands has simply opened the way for offshore extraction; the Chekka factories and others may have controls but these are limited.

On the other hand, groups at all levels, from institutes to voluntary organizations, scientific and social, international and local, have become increasingly involved in environmental issues. The UN agencies have stepped up their initiatives, but not to the extent that one would expect given the levels of environmental deterioration, war or no war. Bilateral aid from German, French and Italian governments and agencies, as well as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, is coming in earmarked for the environment.

The universities are also trying to work on the issues. But due to lack of funding their attempts focus mostly on face-saving activities such as scientific meetings and conferences. This leaves the voluntary organizations. Environmental groups are increasing everywhere. They are getting a fair amount of coverage on the many television stations. Amazingly they have also managed to forget their confessional differences enough to create an environmental forum. Although it has not yet taken any action its very existence is a miracle.

All this has increased public awareness and forced government agencies and leading politicians to come to grips with environmental issues, taking them seriously as a factor in any major decision.

Perhaps one day, when my daughter and I go walking, I will no longer have to worry about the effects on her health and we will both be able to enjoy the beauty of our 'land of milk and honey' once more. When this happens the miracle will indeed have taken place. ■

Dr Mohammed Khawlie is Professor of Geology at the American University of Beirut and a leading international spokesperson on environmental issues.

Worth reading on Beirut and Lebanon

Pity the Nation by *Robert Fisk* (Andre Deutsch 1990) is a gripping account of a journalist's experience of the Lebanon conflict. For those who want a more analytical approach, *Theodor Hanf's* **Coexistence in wartime Lebanon** (IB Tauris/Centre for Lebanese Studies 1993) is full of facts and figures with details of the surveys he conducted.

For more historical analysis *Kamal Salibi's* **A House of Many Mansions** (IB Tauris 1988) is a must, while *Jonathan Randal's* **The Tragedy of Lebanon** (Chatto and Windus 1983) charts the first years of the war. There is a whole range of books on the 1982 Israeli invasion: **Beirut Fragments**, by *Jean Makdisi* (Persea Books 1990) takes you movingly through one woman's experience; while **Israel's Lebanon War** by the Israelis *Ze'ev Schiff* and *Ehud Ya'ari* (George Allen and Unwin 1985) and **The Battle of Beirut** by *Michael Jansen* (Zed Books 1982) give you different viewpoints.

Rosemary Sayigh's books on the Palestinians are both classics - **Palestinians from Peasants to Revolutionaries** (Zed Books 1979), and the more recent **Too Many Enemies** (Zed Books 1994).

For a summary look at the Minority Rights Group reports **Lebanon: a conflict of Minorities** and **The Palestinians**, both by *David McDowall* . And for anyone interested in keeping up with events, **Middle East International**, 21 Collingham Road, London SW5 ONU, UK or 1700 17th St NW #306, Washington DC 20009, US, and **The Middle East Report** (MERIP) PO Box 43445, Washington DC 20010, US and more specifically, the **Lebanon Report** and **Beirut Review**, both from Box 1377, Highland Park, NJ 08904, US, are well worth subscribing to.

The *International Broadcasting Trust* has produced a video and a booklet entitled **The War Generation - Beirut** which chart the experience of different people during the war. They are available from **IBT**, 2 Ferdinand Place, London NW1 8EE.

Don't forget the many Lebanese poets, playwrights and novelists, from *Khalil Gibran* to *Amin Malouf* and *Elias Khoury*.

And finally, thanks to all those who helped me with ideas for this magazine, including *Fida Nasrallah* and *Nadim Shehadeh* at the Centre for Lebanese Studies, and *Leila, Nabiha* and friends, *Khadije, Ramona, Aliya* and *Albert*.

CHILD LABOUR

Carpet kids

Pressure of poverty runs industry in Nepal

DAVE CLARK / FOLLY PICTURES

One of 150,000 children making carpets in Kathmandu who can get silicosis and arthritis.

Each winter in Nepal there is a month of festivities. It is the most important time of the year in both religious and family terms. Though it is still the tourist season Kathmandu closes down as city-dwellers rush home to their villages with gifts.

Last year, for the first time in his life, Chandra Syangtang was one of those who did not make it home for the festival. He spent it working in a Kathmandu carpet factory. At 18 years of age he no longer counts as one of Nepal's 150,000 carpet children though he has laboured in the industry for four years.

A year earlier the factory owner asked Chandra to recruit some new workers during his visit home for the festival. Chandra found a young boy in his village and took him back to Kathmandu. Soon after arriving in the factory the boy fell ill and the owner had to pay out $100 in medical expenses. When he recovered the boy ran away and the furious owner told Chandra he would have to work unpaid until the boy's medical debt had been cleared. As he earned just $10 a month he had to work through the festival.

Chandra's father, Kawe, says he sent Chandra, his other son Ghan and his daughter Yangi to Kathmandu because he couldn't feed them. Even though Kawe is wealthy in Nepali terms because he owns irrigated land on the river plain, his total debts amounted to $12,000, six times his yearly income. He says the food he grows is sufficient to feed his family for just six months of the year.

Children, some as young as five, make up half the workforce in Nepal's 2,000 carpet factories. Like Chandra, 97 per cent come from poor rural families who have never had enough to eat and who have always relied on their children to survive.

The Nepali carpet industry employs 10 times more children than the more publicized Indian industry. The average age is 13 but 12,000 are younger than 10. They work 16 hours a day, seven days a week, squashed shoulder to shoulder on wooden planks, breathing air laden with cotton dust. Half suffer from malnutrition and others are affected by silicosis, early arthritis and eye strain.

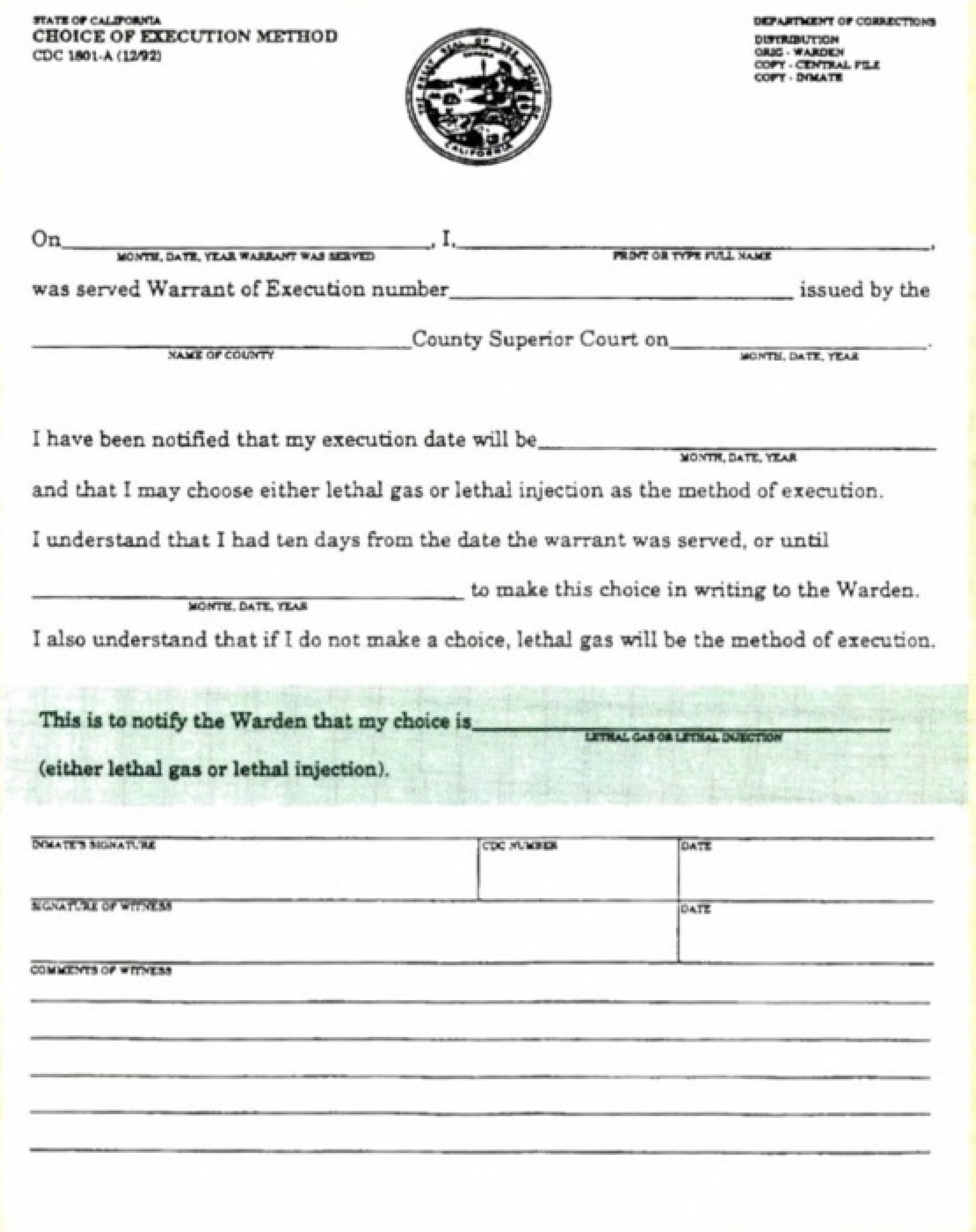
But while the Indian Government says publicly that it wants to stamp out child labour, the Nepali Government refuses to recognize it as a problem. According to Bijay Sainju from Child Workers in Nepal, an organization working principally with carpet children, 'When we try to talk to the Prime Minister about child labour he says "we've eradicated it". The reality is that the export market is controlled by a few big guys who have close links to the Government.' ■

Rebecca Dodd/ActionAid

Cleaning up keshari

Millions of farming families will be saved from the risk of becoming severely disabled as a result of research by Indian scientists into a protein-rich but toxic pulse. High consumption of the drought-resistant keshari dal (*Lathyrus sativus*) can affect the part of the brain that controls the movement of the lower limbs, leading to pronounced spine and nerve abnormalities. It is eaten in India (where annual production runs at more than a million tons despite a ban on its cultivation), Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Ethiopia. Scientists at the National Institute of Nutrition in Hyderabad have produced low-toxin varieties of the crop to be distributed to farmers this year. The new varieties have white flowers, in contrast with the blue flowers of the toxic variety, to help illiterate farmers tell them apart.

Sudhirendar Sharma/Panos Features



STATE OF CALIFORNIA
CHOICE OF EXECUTION METHOD
CDC 1801-A (12/92)

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
DISTRIBUTION
ORIG - WARDEN
COPY - CENTRAL FILE
COPY - INMATE

On ______________ (MONTH, DATE, YEAR WARRANT WAS SERVED), I, ______________ (PRINT OR TYPE FULL NAME),

was served Warrant of Execution number ______________ issued by the

______________ (NAME OF COUNTY) County Superior Court on ______________ (MONTH, DATE, YEAR).

I have been notified that my execution date will be ______________ (MONTH, DATE, YEAR)

and that I may choose either lethal gas or lethal injection as the method of execution.

I understand that I had ten days from the date the warrant was served, or until

______________ (MONTH, DATE, YEAR) to make this choice in writing to the Warden.

I also understand that if I do not make a choice, lethal gas will be the method of execution.

This is to notify the Warden that my choice is ______________ (LETHAL GAS OR LETHAL INJECTION)

(either lethal gas or lethal injection).

INMATE'S SIGNATURE	CDC NUMBER	DATE
SIGNATURE OF WITNESS		DATE

COMMENTS OF WITNESS

Death by mail order: Prisoners on Death Row in California are sent this form in the ordinary mail asking them to select the method of their own execution.

ENVIRONMENT

ROD HARBINSON

Marlen's land among the tree-stumps: 'If I close my eyes I will remember the sun going down on the branches of the trees'.

Paradise postponed

Free-for-all leads to destruction in Albania

ALBANIA is emerging from the trauma of communist isolation into a new world, with dire consequences for the country's beautiful and mountainous environment. Avenues of trees used to line the main highways. Now mile after mile of stumps testify to the desperation of town folk, who have to rely on wood for fuel during long winter power cuts.

At Vallbona, far in the north, where glistening snow-capped peaks mark the Montenegro border, Marlen guides us up the valley to his land. He is proud of the two hectares he inherited. He can at last call it his own after the restitution of land returned it to private hands.

He gestures towards the hillside, now covered in silvery, charred tree stumps: 'If I close my eyes I will remember the sun going down on the branches of the trees and the flowers and the spring grass'.

Back in Vallbona a valley herder, Genty, tells tales of wolves taking the animals. 'Fourteen of the neighbours' animals got taken two months ago,' he says. Bears also roam the valley and occasionally take animals but are generally shy. Genty knows of four in this valley alone, though with much of their habitat gone they don't hang around.

People in Vallbona can't afford guns, but there are some who can and who exploit the precarious position of animals in the country. In a main street in the capital, Tirana, a souvenir shop is selling a brown bear skin. Just $300 and its yours. The thronged market is full of fox furs.

A temporary ban on hunting was imposed in January after protests by Protection & Preservation of the Natural Environment Albania (PPNEA). Professor Leke Gilknuri, who heads the group, explains that things were getting out of control. Italian hunters have been coming over on organized tours, bringing bait, decoys and rifles. He receives reports from port customs officials that coaches are returning to Italy packed with game, particularly ducks.

Government policy is confused. The Environment Committee is worried about the effects of erosion and logging on wildlife. However, without ministerial status the committee's advice is often overridden by more powerful influences. Maksim Deliana, Director of Industry at the Chamber of Commerce, regards timber production as one of the few potential growth areas for the Albanian economy in the near future.

'People's view of the world has shrunk to a daily search for food,' says Marlen. Genty laughs at Marlen's idealistic suggestion of replanting the mountainside for future generations. For Genty and his family, recently freed by the receding snow, the struggle for survival is now. ■

Rod Harbinson

Eye for intelligence

They look and taste revolting but are selling out in shops across Japan. Tuna eyeballs, about the size of grapefruit, sell at 500 yen ($5) a three-pack. The craze comes after widely-publicized studies on animals in Britain and Japan suggesting a substance (docosahexaenoic acid or DHA) found in the eyeballs may help improve brain performance. Even though results haven't been proven in humans a clever marketing strategy has created a demand for the eyeballs as brain food. As for the food industry – they've been having a field day with DHA for the past two years. The stuff is added to, and used as a selling point for, canned tuna, processed seafood, soy bean paste, soy sauce, baby formula, carbonated drinks, confectionery and even dog food.

Far Eastern Economic Review, Vol 157 No 21

Shoot the dictatorship

Since 1988 Burma has been controlled by a military junta – SLORC – which has waged war against minority groups and protesters, used forced labour to build transport networks and kept Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest. Now it is presenting a more welcoming image of itself in order to woo tourist dollars. A Burma support group based in Japan believes travellers can still foil the junta's aims by exposing the realities of life under dictatorship. They are sponsoring a photo contest with cash prizes for the best photographs taken by travellers that expose SLORC's whitewash for the lie it is. The entry deadline is 1 December. For further details contact: Burmese Relief Center — Japan, 266-27 Ozuku-cho, Kashihara-Shi, Nara-ken 634, Japan. Tel: (07442) 2 8236. Fax: (07442) 4 6254.

PETER STALKER

Recycled

Just Nicked, a shop opened by police in Chatham in Kent, UK, to display unclaimed stolen property was facing closure after being burgled.

The Independent, 16 May 1994

NOMADS

ADRIAN ARBIB

A young Masai man blows a Kudu horn as a symbol of his coming into manhood. Some go into a catatonic state at the sound.

Smash and grab

Migrants threatened by land seizures

No-one came out to greet me when I arrived in the village of Kokuro. This seemed strange. I had been invited to spend a fortnight with the villagers and was told they eagerly awaited my visit. Only when I stepped among the huts did I realize what was wrong: the ground was littered with the heads of the inhabitants.

The people of Kokuro were nomads of the Turkana tribe, who live in the arid savannahs in the far north-west of Kenya. They are among the last of the world's truly migratory people. Like the other East African nomads – peoples such as the Maasai, Samburu and Barabaig – they are in serious trouble. If the killings and the theft of their land do not stop, their migrations could come to an end within a year.

In southern Kenya and northern Tanzania the main problem is the annexation of the nomads' land. Here the Maasai's best pastures have been taken by both land grabbers and conservationists. Parks and reserves have enclosed nearly all their important dry-season grazing lands, so the Maasai are unable to move their herds of cattle and goats when the rains cease. As a result they are forced to overgraze their remaining territory, and the parks and reserves are becoming islands of biodiversity in a sea of degradation. Conservation has become one of the major causes of environmental destruction in East Africa.

The Government has long been trying to privatize the Maasai's land. Its disastrously flawed legislation has allowed both corrupt Maasai elders and wealthy people from outside the community to seize vast chunks for themselves, leaving tens of thousands of people landless. Most of them have ended up in the cities, living in unimaginably desperate conditions without the faintest prospect of finding a job.

The situation of the nomads of northern Kenya is, if anything, worse. The village of Kokuro is one of scores surrounded during the night by cattle raiders. Astonishingly, these bandits, who have killed perhaps ten thousand of the Turkana in the last three years, are being armed by their governments.

The Government of Sudan has been giving submachine guns and rocket launchers to the people of the Toposa tribe in the hope that they will use them to attack local rebels. But the Toposa are far more interested in settling old scores with the Turkana and stealing their cattle. The Kenyan Government has been arming the Pokot tribe for the express purpose of cattle raiding: ministers and army chiefs are co-ordinating the raids, trucking the stolen cattle down to Nairobi.

The Pokot and the Toposa have driven the Turkana out of their best grazing lands and into the desert. There their cattle die and the Turkana are forced to migrate in search of food relief: hundreds have died trying to cross the terrible Suguta Valley, where there are no water points for ten days.

Yet the situation is not entirely hopeless. In some places the nomads have found ways of coping with these disasters. The Kenyan Government is sensitive to international opinion: pressure from foreign governments and people could make an enormous difference. ■

George Monbiot

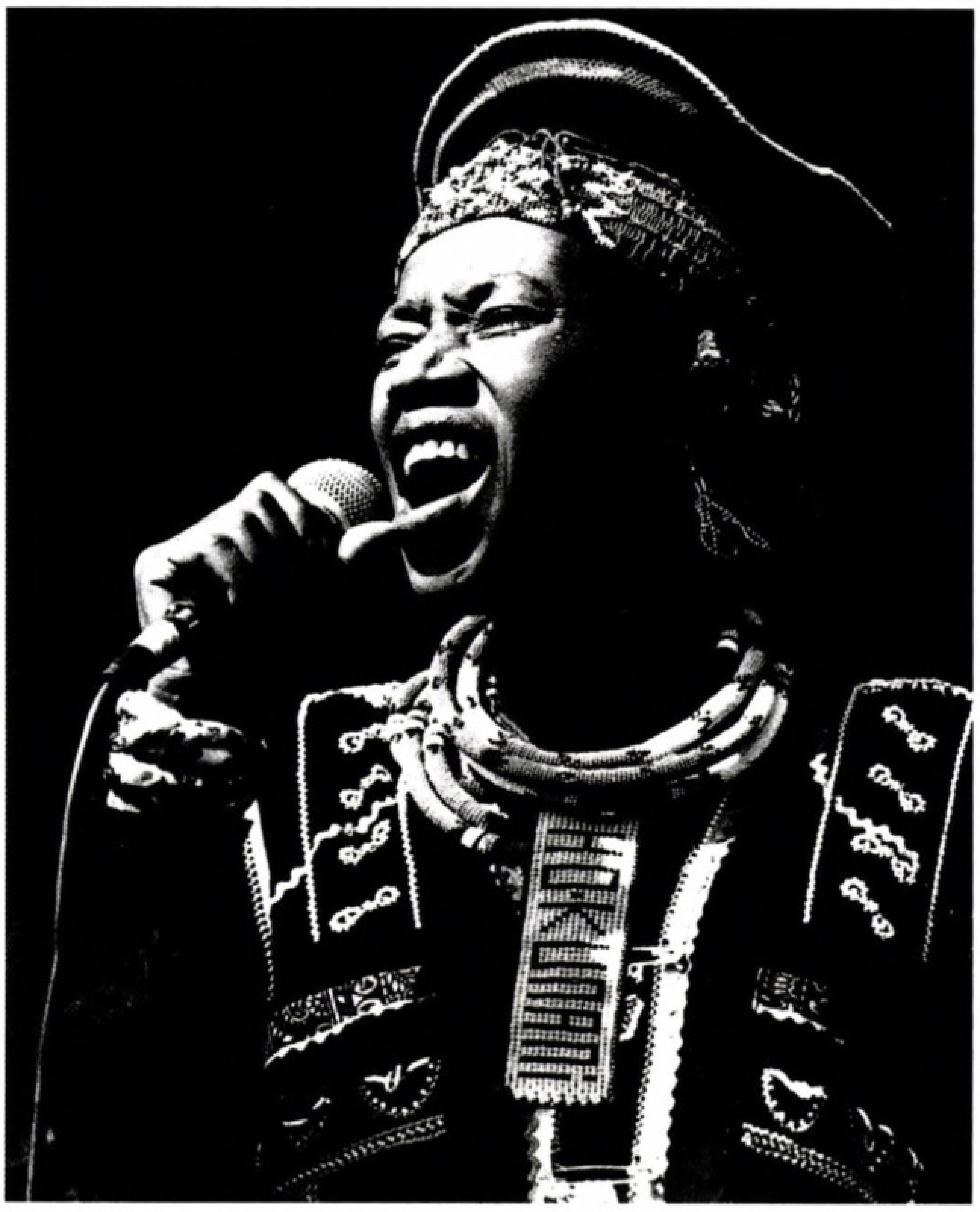
No Man's Land: an investigative journey through Kenya and Tanzania by **George Monbiot** was published in June by Macmillan, London.

END

END Quote

'A bad thing has been turned into a good thing.'

Chinese President Jiang Zemin, saying the 1989 Tiananmen massacre has led to stability and faster economic reform.



Busi Mhlongo: fire, tears and exacting lyrics.

music

Babhemu

by **Busi Mhlongo & Twasa**
(Stern's STCD 1053)

No-one could accuse Busi Mhlongo of rushing to the recording studio. **Babhemu** (Friends) is, remarkably, the Durban-born singer's debut album as a solo artist after some 30 years in the music business. The nine-song album is the latest turn in a life that has embraced theatre work, a stint with afro-funk band Osibisa and years of exile in Holland.

For people who remember her interpretations of Billie Holiday classics or recall Busi as a *mbube* singer of Xhosa click songs, **Babhemu** will come as something of a surprise. Twasa, Busi's nine-strong backing group led by her co-writer/guitarist Doc Mthalane, specializes in a light, rolling South African soul style. But it's Busi's voice that everyone remembers. Hailed as a universal soul singer – with luminaries like Miriam Makeba, Letta Mbulu and the Mahotella Queens as her direct antecedents – she has one of those voices whose emotional power transcends language barriers. With the exception of one English-sung number, Busi favours her native Xhosa. This means that non-Xhosa speakers are, to some extent, shielded from some exacting lyrics. *Umenthisi* (Matches) has some Xhosa lines which translate as 'White people, white people. Do you see the horrors you have done?'

Although simply expressed this is strong stuff and Busi delivers accordingly. She has rangy vocal ability: from growl to a high melodic fluting sound. A single phrase can produce a wave of emotion; and not in the listener alone. On stage Busi's eyes can flood with tears in one moment and flash fire in the next.

Perhaps this is most evident on **Babhemu**'s stirring title track. 'I'm coming home,' she sings, 'The sun rises and the sun sets... I'm coming home.' With its theme of the return of exiles, this song is the most tailored to South Africa's recent history. Propelled forwards, first by voice, then by drums, guitars and chorus, it builds up into an unstoppable surge of sound. It ends on an individual note – Busi's piping voice and a quick rumble from a drum – but only after having eloquently expressed the yearnings of a nation.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆

books

Inside the Haveli

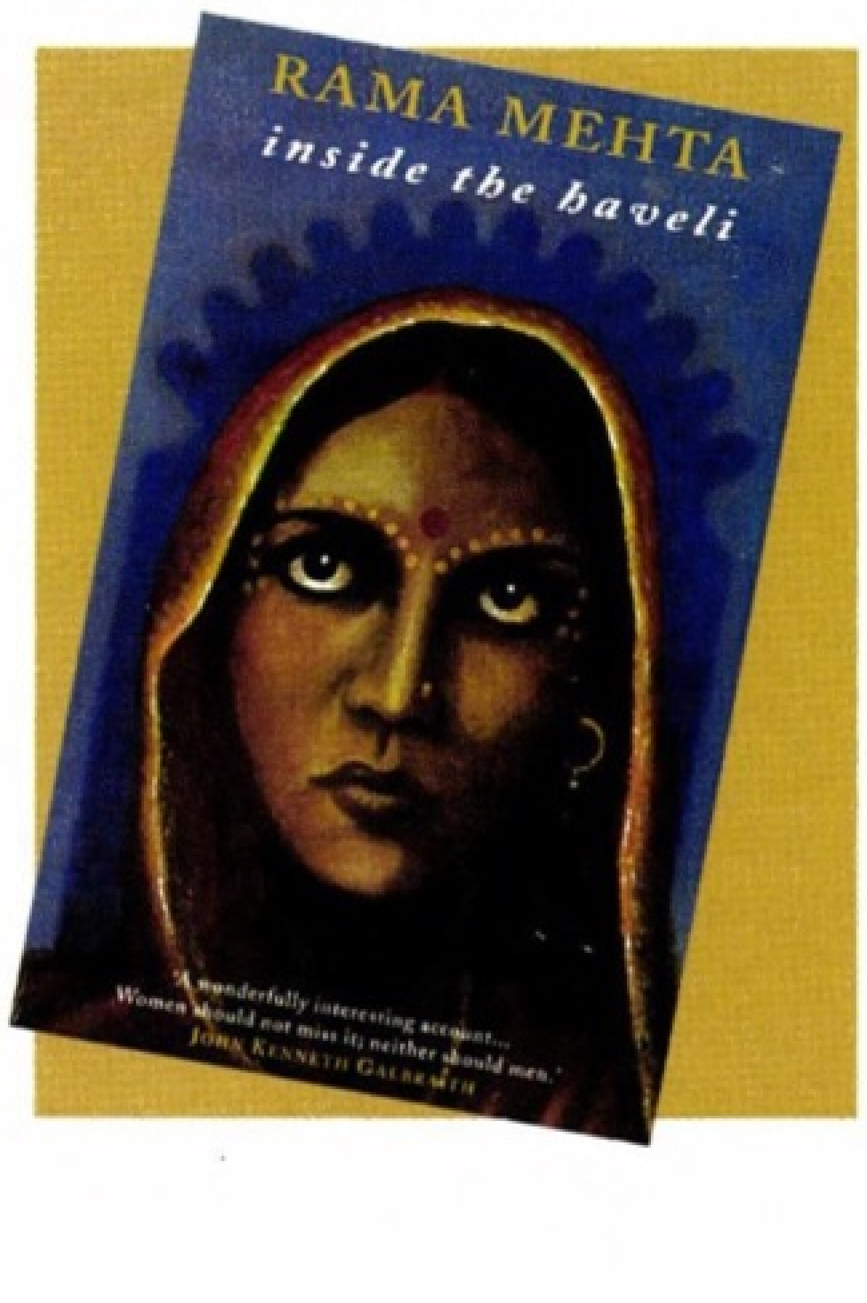
by **Rama Mehta** *(The Women's Press ISBN 0-7043-4394-0)*

With her pink bridal sari pulled down well over her face Geeta, an educated woman from cosmopolitan Bombay, stumbles into the enclosed world of the *haveli*. She is now in Udaipur with her husband's aristocratic and orthodox family whose notions of a woman's 'honour' translate into a stultifying existence. The *haveli* with its maze of rooms dividing the sexes and generations, houses the extended clan and their retinue of servants. As a wife of the *haveli*, Geeta's life must shrink to the confines of its ageworn walls.

The novel charts the years of attrition and accommodation that follow with a wealth of incident and fascinating detail. Rama Mehta's keen sociologist's mind tackles the minutiae of a formidable cast of characters' lives with assurance, looking beyond their self-deception to give an informed critique. The women have few secrets – in their gregarious community there is space for sympathy, support and, at times, divisive judgement. Slowly Geeta introduces changes in the functioning of the *haveli,* but at the same time subsides into its traditions.

However, when Rama Mehta moves beyond the ambivalence of Geeta's experience towards a sense of affirmation, her narrative becomes less than convincing. The charm of the aristocracy, their benevolence to their servants, the essential goodness and dignity of the patriarchs become a bit much and work against the troubled insights that bristle within the book.

Politics ☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆


RAMA MEHTA
inside the haveli
'A wonderfully interesting account... Women should not miss it; neither should men.'
JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH

Crime control as industry

by **Nils Christie** *(Routledge ISBN 0-415-9478-x)*

'None of the conditions that made Auschwitz possible has truly disappeared, and no effective measures have been undertaken to prevent such possibilities ...'

So writes criminologist Nils Christie in a book which reveals the close connection between current hysteria about crime and the Holocaust. Could it be crime control rather than crime itself that is the real danger for modern society? Incarceration rates have escalated in many countries – including Canada and the UK. Next to killing, imprisonment is the strongest measure of power at the disposal of the State. 'With the offender seen as another breed, a non-person, a thing, there are no limits to possible atrocities...' according to Christie. The 'increase in crime' can no longer be given as the justification for the explosion in the number of prisoners. Privatization has made it profitable to build and run prisons. The 'corrections business' is booming and interlocking with an increase in State control mechanisms.

This book may help us stop and think rather than carry on complacently riding the wave towards a Western Gulag.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆

film

We don't want to talk about it

directed by **Maria Luisa Bemberg**

'This tale is dedicated to all the people who have the courage to be "different" in order to be themselves.' So goes the preface to Maria Luisa Bemberg's elegant and passionate film set in a small gossipy town in 1930s Argentina. Based on a short story by Julio Llinas, it concerns the rich widow Leonor (Luisina Brando), her young daughter Charlotte (Alejandra Podesta), and the enigmatic and womanizing Ludovico D'Andrea (Marcello Mastroianni). Charlotte is the apple of her mother's eye – talented and beautiful – but different from the other girls in that she is also a person of restricted growth. It is the thing that is not talked about. Leonor has protectively exorcised all reference to 'dwarfs' from her house, burning books of fairy tales – *Tom*

Leonor: desperately creating taboos.

Thumb, Snow White and Gulliver's Travels, all are gone. When the teenage Charlotte gives a piano recital her mother wants her to be seated at the piano before the curtain goes up. But Charlotte defies her and walks across the stage. Later Leonor is even more disturbed to catch Charlotte dressing up as Carmen: it is obvious that she would actually prefer her to be a little girl for the rest of her life. It is only D'Andrea who really sees Charlotte for what she is when he falls madly in love with her and gives up his bachelor ways to marry her.

The title of Bemberg's film says much – in eradicating all cultural references to short people Leonor creates a taboo around Charlotte which by the end of the film the woman has magically defied. This should not be construed as a realist, issue-led film; it's more of a fable set in a once-upon-a-time and far-away land. There is a semblance of a period in the details, but when one begins to scrutinize, it's hard to discern when the story might be set. Peppered with a wry humour, it also says much about small-town madness. Typical is one moment when a doddering member of the wedding party dies but everyone pretends he is asleep until he is wheeled off and packed in ice so that the nuptial festivities can continue. With an exquisite ending that garlands the film **We don't want to talk about it** is a rare treat. Leonor might ban fairy tales but Bemberg has found a new one to replace them.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆

STAR RATING

Excellent	☆☆☆☆☆
Very good	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Poor	☆

Reviews editor: **Vanessa Baird**

THE *classic*

Horses

Being the album that both presaged punk and broke the mould of rock machismo...

WITH a regularity that is now almost cyclical, music specialist magazines draw up lists of the 100 best albums ever released. Sometimes the categories vary: the 100 most influential albums ever released, the 100 most indispensable albums and so forth. Patti Smith's debut album release from 1975 **Horses** features on them all. That's gratifying – even if such lists do not exactly figure highly on objectivity stakes – because for me **Horses** remains the apotheosis of rock 'n' roll.

Patti Smith was not, as a full page review of the album printed in a November 1975 issue of the UK *New Musical Express* wryly noted, the stuff that rock heroism is generally made of. She was a poet who shared the beatnik's love affair with Rimbaud and Verlaine. Her own lyrics seemed like free associative strings that whiplashed with darkly sexual undertows through a neurotic heartland. The music's current was similarly dark and sexual and John Cale – the Welsh wunderkind whose personal journey had led him through European avant-gardism to membership of the Velvet Underground – was brought in as producer. Not suprisingly he accentuated the Smith band's thrashing rhythm.

To the ears of a teenager in rural Britain, **Horses** was simultaneously frightening and exhilarating. Its opening song was a Van Morrison number, *Gloria.* Its first line – 'Jesus died for somebody's sins, but not mine' – tapped, even in one as anti-religious as me, vague alarm bells about blasphemy. The song's first person described the seduction of a woman. It was confusing; yet there was a primal urgency about the album's speed that even I, whose world was bound by Latin verbs and university entrance procedures, could recognize.

The remaining seven songs were Smith's own compositions. A few additional musicians – Tom Verlaine (who also co-wrote *Break It Up*) and Allen Lanier from the Blue Oyster Cult – joined the four-piece band at various junctures. The album is driven by the intense force of Richard Sohl's piano and Lenny Naye's rubbery guitar. The words, however, are very much Smith's and it is the words which make **Horses** extraordinary. The pivotal track is called *Land*: it deals with the violence at the heart of desire and speaks its content in a way that rock had not heard since the Doors recorded their oedipal opus *The End*. Smith's quality of rebellion was seductively savage. Eighteen long months later, punk and the Sex Pistols were to institutionalize rebellion for their own purposes. Words and phrases like 'destroy', 'anarchy', 'no future' buzzed about. Smith was to be tagged with the punk label although her rebellion never shared punk's nihilistic leanings. **Horses** was about something much more fundamental: the energy of being alive.

Then there was the question of image. The first phase of women's liberation had passed a generation before, but in many ways it had left rock music untouched. The 1960s and early 1970s were filled with singer-songwriters like Joni Mitchell and Joan Baez who, despite their ability with words, exemplified a feminine passivity. Even Janis Joplin – whose full-throated R&B was approvingly dubbed by the media as 'ballsy' – managed a blowsy look of vulnerability. Joplin, who died through an injudicious mixture of booze and pills, was a woman out of control. Smith was very different. She was tall and thin with wiry black hair; her choice of sexual object didn't seem to matter. Robert Mapplethorpe – a photographer whose homo-erotic pictures were later to outrage the moral majority of the US – captured this transgressive aspect perfectly for the **Horses** sleeve. It is one of his most beautiful portraits. He had shot her from underneath and her gaze, heavy-lidded and clear, makes direct eye-contact with the viewer. It's a portrait of an archangel dressed as a school prefect, or so it seemed to me at the time. Mapplethorpe had dressed Smith in jeans, white shirt and black, dangling tie. The intended androgeny was mitigated by her long, tapering fingers, but the point was made.

'**Horses**,' wrote Charles Shaar Murray in his *NME* review, 'is what happens when the fuses blow and the light goes out'. When the lights go out and darkness falls, we dream. There is, as Freud realized a century ago, a sexual secret at the core of every dream. It's what makes them so disturbing. On a conscious level there were thousands, maybe millions, who found in Smith's free-form rock poetry their own incitement to freedom. On a deeper level many recognize within **Horses** the content of their own fantasies.

Patti Smith was never to repeat this performance. Certainly, she made other records. Bruce Springsteen wrote *Because the Night* for her and it became her biggest hit. Patti Smith was last heard of a few years ago: she lives in America's midwest with her husband and children. She still makes music; she still writes poetry. But **Horses** remains a one-off. If it was a revelation to a generation, then for its creator herself it was perhaps an exorcism. ■

Louise Gray

Horses *by Patti Smith is available on Arista/BMG Records*

QUESTIONS

...that have always intrigued you about the world will appear in this, your section, and be answered by other readers. **Please address your answers and questions to 'Curiosities'.**

BILL LYONS / CAMERA PRESS; RETO HUGIN / CAMERA PRESS

Their fathers' daughters: Benazir Bhutto (left) and Indira Gandhi.

Can anyone explain to me why we have managed to have women prime ministers in India and Pakistan and still have deplorable treatment of women?

Could it be that India and Pakistan elected women prime ministers because Indira Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto were both daughters of previous prime ministers? Likewise Sirimavo Bandaranaike was the wife of the Sri Lankan prime minister and Corazon Aquino was the wife of the leading Filipino opposition leader. Once elected, however, Bandaranaike and Gandhi became formidable leaders in their own right.

Bernard Misrchi
London, UK

Did Ringo Starr play drums in the Beatles' *Strawberry Fields*?

The Beatles recorded two versions of *Strawberry Fields* – a slower, lighter version featuring guitars, drums and mellotron and a faster, more heavily orchestrated version. With some technical trickery the beginning of the first version was joined to the end of the second and this hybrid was released. Ringo played on both versions.

Charlie Brady
Glebe, Australia

Does anyone know anything about the drug Filon which was withdrawn in 1974/5?

I have something to add to the answer given in **NI 256**. Filon contained phenmetrazine theoclate and phenmetrazine hydrochloride – appetite suppressants used to treat obesity, with limited success because tolerance develops. They have the additional drawback of stimulating the central nervous system, causing high blood pressure and even seizures. Although Filon is no longer on the UK market similar anorectic drugs continue to be marketed.

You can verify this information in *Martindale – The extra pharmacopoeia* (pages 65-70 of the 29th edition) published in London by the Pharmaceutical Press. As a pharmacist who used to work for a drug information service I know it can be difficult for non-health care workers to find information about old drugs.

Lorraine Phillips
Calgary, Canada

This drug was listed in the *British National Formulary* as recently as 1980. It was manufactured by Berk Pharmaceuticals, whose current address is: Brampton Road, Hampden Park, Eastbourne, BN22 9AG, UK.

Dr Elisabeth Murray
Thingnall, UK

AWAITING YOUR ANSWERS

Which country in the world was under colonial rule for the longest time?

Tariq M M Antar
Khartoum, Sudan

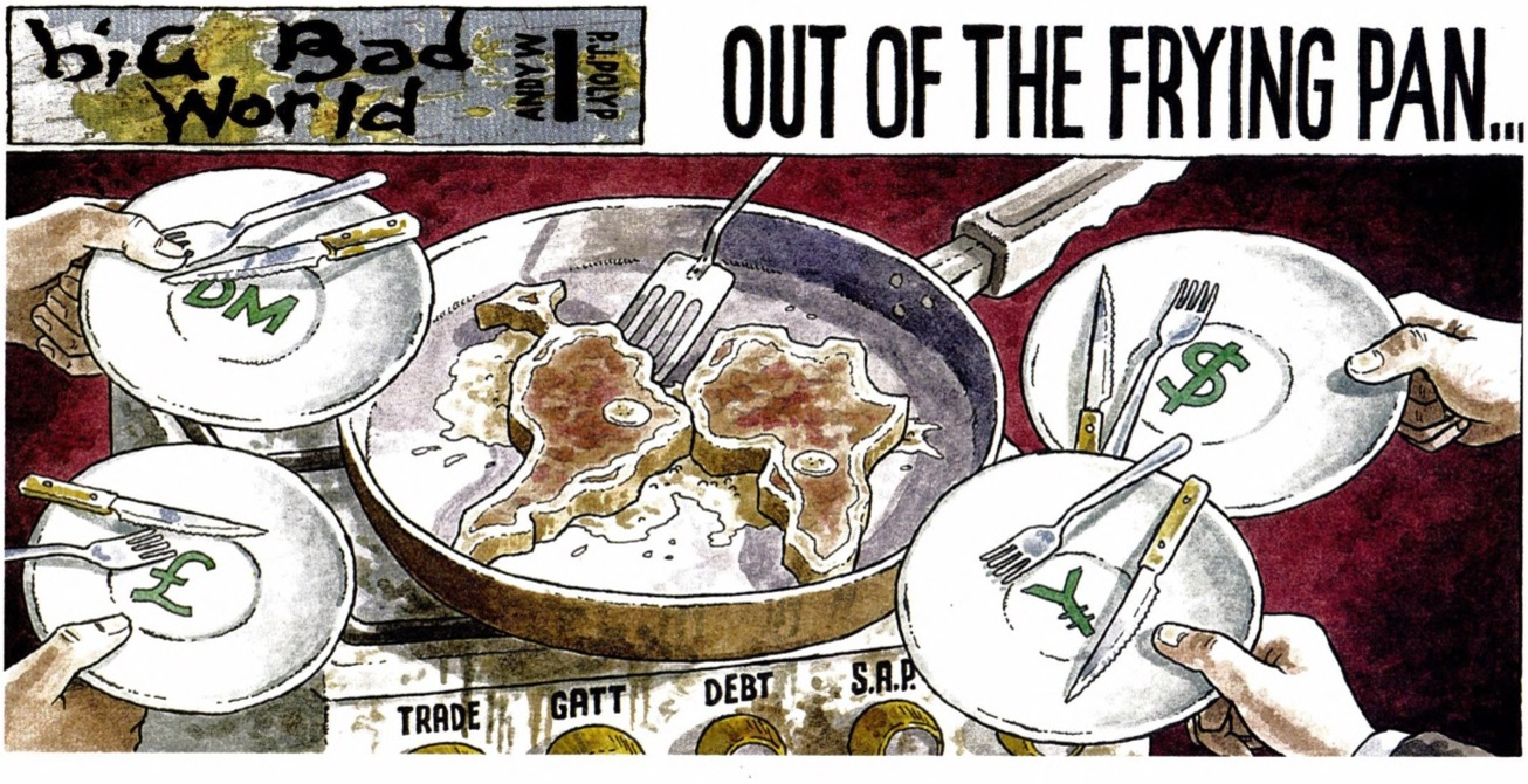
Which, if any, of the British commercial banks has cancelled its Third World debts – particularly in regard to sub-Saharan Africa?

Liza Sandell
Suva, Fiji

I've noticed that the war in the former Yugoslavia has been described as 'ethnic conflict' while what has been happening in Rwanda is described as 'tribal war'. What is the difference between an 'ethnic group' and a 'tribe'?

Janet Tomkins
Vancouver, Canada

If you have any questions or answers please send them to Curiosities, **New Internationalist, 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW, UK,** or to your local NI office (see inside front cover for addresses).



Return of the Tonton Macoutes

The people of Haiti are at the mercy of a murderous military regime. The UN looked on. ***Charles Arthur*** *saw it happen.*

FROM August to October last year I was in Haiti working for the UN Civilian Mission. Along with 200 or so other 'observers' my job was to monitor the human-rights situation during the implementation of a UN-brokered plan for the return from exile of the Haitian President Aristide. Although I already knew quite a bit about Haiti nothing could prepare me for what was to come.

In the two years since the military coup against Aristide, who had polled 67 per cent of the vote in the country's first free election, Haiti had become what Amnesty International termed 'a human-rights tragedy'. The military had set out to destroy the network of peasant unions, progressive Catholic groups, student and labour unions and neighbourhood associations which had given voice to the demands of Haiti's poor majority. These self-help groups that made up Aristide's embryonic *Lavalas* movement were suffering dreadful repression. Over 3,000 people had been killed, thousands more had been detained, beaten and tortured. Conservative estimates put the numbers of internally displaced at 250,000.

SEBASTIAO SALGADO

When I started work at the observers' Port-au-Prince office these statistics were brought to life by the graphic testimonies of the Haitians who queued up to report their experiences. Individually and in groups they told of missing or imprisoned relatives, beatings and death threats, months spent in hiding and living in fear. Many had fled from the countryside where the military had reinstalled the section chiefs who ran their communities like personal fiefdoms, levying taxes, extorting money and administering beatings to anyone who crossed them. Others were from the densely-packed slums of Port-au-Prince where armed *attachés* (previously notorious as the *Tonton Macoutes*) waited, watched and listened for signs of dissent.

These people, whose desperation drove them to risk being seen entering or leaving our office, wanted and expected help. Restricted by our mandate to compiling reports, all we could offer was sympathy.

Incredibly, in this atmosphere the UN suspended economic sanctions. Within days the military carried out the highly symbolic assassination of Antoine Izmery, an outspoken supporter of Aristide who had financed his successful election campaign. At Izmery's funeral a week later, as I sat in a clearly-marked UN jeep outside the church, a woman shouted 'useless!' at us from a passing car.

Over the next few weeks the number of killings and disappearances in Port-au-Prince increased. The nights were punctuated by regular bursts of gunfire. The observers spent more time following up sightings of dead bodies than interviewing those still living. We would find at least one a day, usually in the streets of the slum areas like Cité Soleil, La Saline and Bel Aire.

Coinciding with this wave of terror a new right-wing organization, claiming the nationalist legacy of the Duvalier dictatorship, emerged. They called themselves the Front for Haitian Advancement and Progress but became better known by their acronym FRAPH. They were a motley grouping of former *Tonton Macoutes*, ex-army officers and de facto government employees who saw their sinecures threatened by Aristide's impending return.

FRAPH ordered a 'general strike' in protest at foreign intervention in Haiti. On the morning of the 'strike' plainclothes gunmen could be seen getting out of police vehicles, chasing stall-holders out of the city's markets and threatening taxi drivers with their pistols. By midmorning the normally bustling streets were deserted, except for the military, the foreign press and the UN observers. Along the road to Cité Soleil I saw a teenage boy on a moped stopped by a carload of *attachés*. They forced him into the back of their car and then threw his moped in on top of him. With strict orders not to leave our jeep we could only sit and watch as they prepared to drive off. Only the intervention of an Italian photographer secured the boy's release and gave him the chance to dash for safety in the labyrinth of Cité Soleil streets.

The week that followed was a blur of events. A crowd of gun-toting *attachés* prevented a US ship carrying the first contingent of a UN assistance mission from docking at Port-au-Prince harbour; the newly-appointed Justice Minister was riddled with bullets as he left work; the army leader General Cedras refused to resign as previously agreed; the entire UN observer mission was evacuated to the Dominican Republic. Aristide could not return, the UN reimposed limited sanctions and Haiti was left to the military and FRAPH.

Having organized and funded the election process that brought Aristide to power the UN had a moral obligation to defend the result. Yet for the best part of two years the organization turned its back, refusing to consider mandatory economic sanctions. Management of the crisis was subcontracted out to the Organization of American States, a toothless regional body dominated by the US. When the UN finally got involved it forced Aristide into an agreement that relied on the goodwill of the murderous Haitian military.

All meetings are now forbidden unless sanctioned by the military. There are even reports of typing classes being banned. Rape, previously uncommon in Haiti, has become one of the main tools of political repression. A Haitian women's group reported over 40 rapes in poor neighbourhoods during one night in March.

By mid-May the US Coast Guard reported that it had picked up and returned some 1,623 people to Haiti so far this year, more than the 1,530 returned during all of 1993. The Clinton administration announced a suspension of these forcible repatriations and is now processing the refugees' applications for political asylum. Thousands of other refugees are making their way to the Bahamas and to the British-owned Turks and Caicos Islands.

As I was leaving Haiti one man told me: 'We are not stupid. We know now that the UN is just playing games with us.' The whole episode is a devastating betrayal of the Haitian people. ■

Charles Arthur works with the Haiti Support Campaign, Trinity Church, Hodford Road, London NW11 8NG, phone and fax (81) 201 9878, from whom further information and suggestions for urgent action can be obtained.

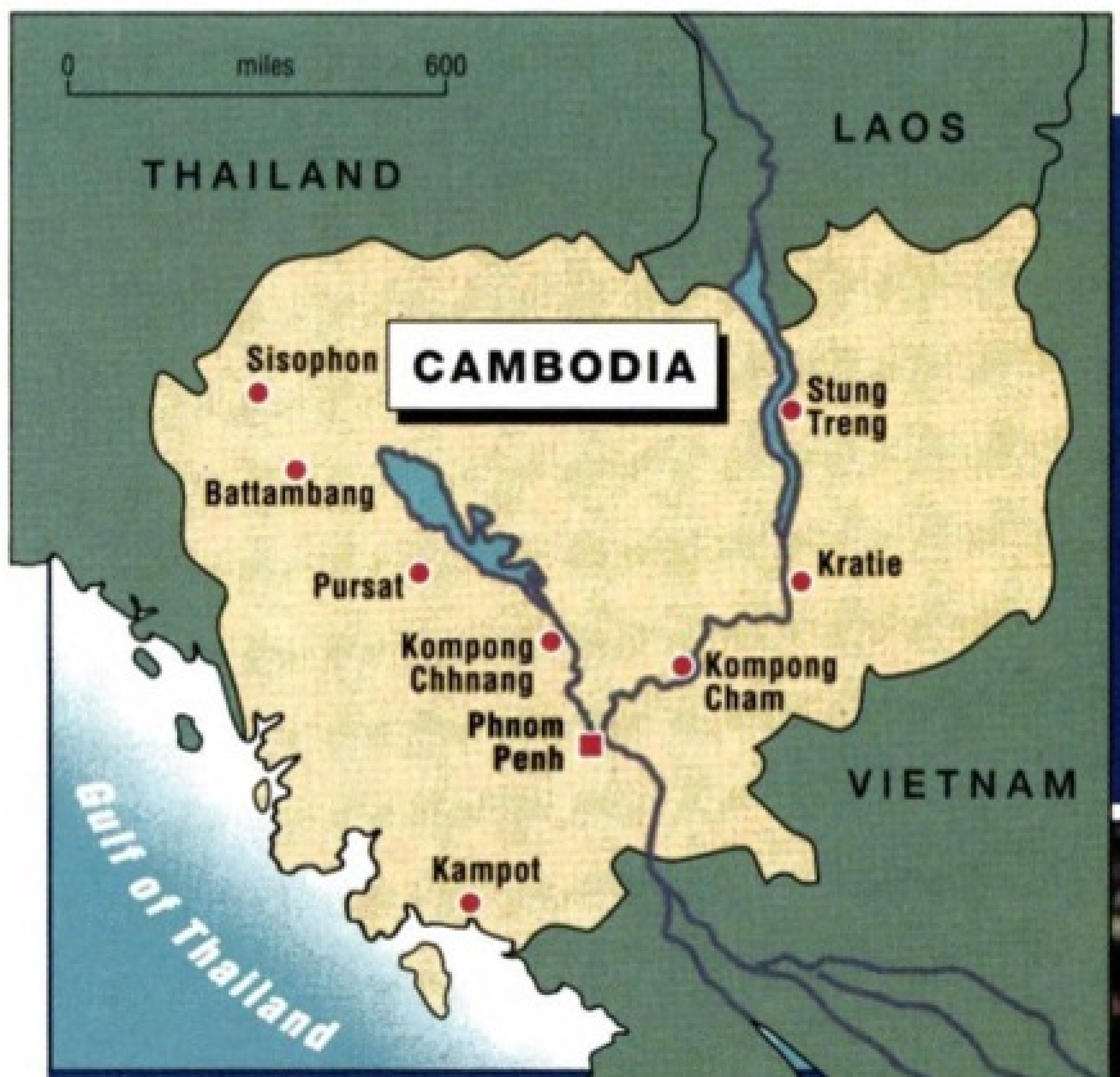
Cambodia

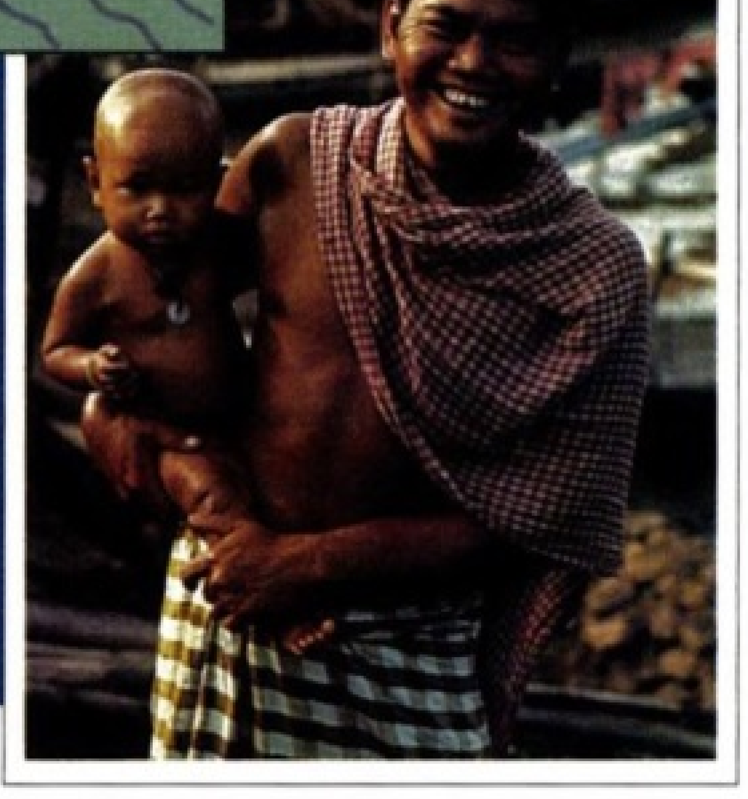
In the wake of the 1993 elections, new nightmares have arisen as Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge guerrillas continue to threaten the fragile government, innocent civilians and other easy targets. They are stronger now than at any time since 1979 when Vietnamese troops invaded and toppled Pol Pot.

Many Cambodians fear Pol Pot will try to fill the vacuum left by departing UN forces by increasing his control over rural areas. His Khmer Rouge ruled Cambodia during his 1975 - 1978 Maoist, back-to-the-jungle 'killing fields' regime in which about one million Cambodians died from mass executions, torture, starvation, neglect and slave labour.

The Khmer Rouge spurned UN offers to participate in the election which brought a narrow victory to US-backed Norodom Sihanouk's royalist party.

As a result of the polls Sihanouk (represented by his son Norodom Ranariddh) shares power with the defeated Vietnamese-installed regime which led the country during the past 13 years under former Prime Minister Hun Sen. The coalition is riddled with former Khmer Rouge guerrillas and collaborators, and snarled by infighting. Some US and other Western diplomats are wary of Sihanouk's offer to allow the Khmer Rouge a role in the fledgeling government. They fear Pol Pot is using the often confused monarch as a stepping stone to seize power again – as in 1975 when he pronounced the Khmer Rouge the nation's saviours and invited home all Cambodians who had fled. As people arrived, however, the Khmer Rouge grabbed them at the airport and slaughtered them in mass graves.





CLAUDE SAUVAGEOT

Minority ethnic Vietnamese are also terrified because Pol Pot and coalition officials have vowed to expel them from Cambodia – or simply kill them. Meanwhile thousands of landmines laid during the war remain buried on roadsides, in rice paddies and on jungle paths despite some UN de-mining. Cambodia suffers one of the world's highest amputee rates due to landmine accidents.

In addition to Pol Pot's effort to return and the traumas remaining after more than 20 years of war, Cambodians are also suffering a sudden collapse of their boom economy because of the UN departure.

The huge UN presence resulted in an influx of imported goods to feed, house, maintain and entertain them, plus a sudden burst of feverish investment and construction by Cambodians and others eager to cash in on the 24,000 relatively rich and free-spending UN officials.

Much of Cambodia's economy will now be controlled by various ethnic minorities and foreigners who have already grabbed whatever they could.

Meanwhile the Khmer Rouge 'wait in the wings to exploit every opportunity to expand their power,' says the Washington-based Campaign to Oppose the Return of the Khmer Rouge 'Pol Pot is sticking with a winning strategy.' The warning bells are ringing loudly. ■

Richard S. Ehrlich

AT A glance

Excellent ★★★★★
Good ★★★★
Fair ★★★
Poor ★★
Appalling ★

POLITICS
Despite elections, still influenced by years of communism.
1983

INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★
20 years of war and genocide have caused destitution. High inflation as economy opened to world trade.
1983 ★★★

ADULT LITERACY ★
Only 22% for women; 35% for men. Pol Pot killed teachers. Most children now have primary education.
1983 ★★

SELF-RELIANCE ★
Dependent for most things. Few skilled workers/professionals survived Pol Pot. Infrastructure destroyed.
1983 ★★

FREEDOM ★★
New regime promised freedoms but practice is different. Dissidence is not tolerated.
1983 ★★

POSITION OF WOMEN ★★
Many men killed, so women fill jobs: but tradition and male dominance prevents women's real power.
1983 ★★★

LIFE EXPECTANCY ★
Women 52 years; men 49 *(US 76 years)*. Health care obliterated during Pol Pot years. Many deaths from mines.
1983 ★

Leaders Joint leadership under Norodom Ranariddh and Hun Sen.
Economy GNP per capita $200 *(US $22,240)*
Monetary unit: Cambodian *riel*
Main exports: Rubber and timber.
Main imports: Machinery, petroleum, textiles. Agriculture employs 75 per cent of workforce; crops are rubber, rice, maize, cassava, fruit, timber. Minerals: gemstones, manganese, phosphates. Vast destruction of roads, bridges, railway lines, electric lines, water systems and other grids in war. Danger of land-mines.
People 8.8 million
Health Infant mortality 117 per 1,000 live births *(US 9 per 1,000)*
Culture Khmer culture with influences from China, India, Vietnam and France. Khmer majority with minority ethnic Chinese and Vietnamese.
Religion: Theravada Buddhist with a tiny Muslim minority.
Languages: Khmer; some French also spoken.

***Sources:** The State of the World's Children 1994; The Asia and Pacific Review 1993/94; Third World Guide 1993/94; World Development Report 1993; Asian Development Bank, World Health Organization, UNESCAP, and government statistics.*

Last profiled in May 1983

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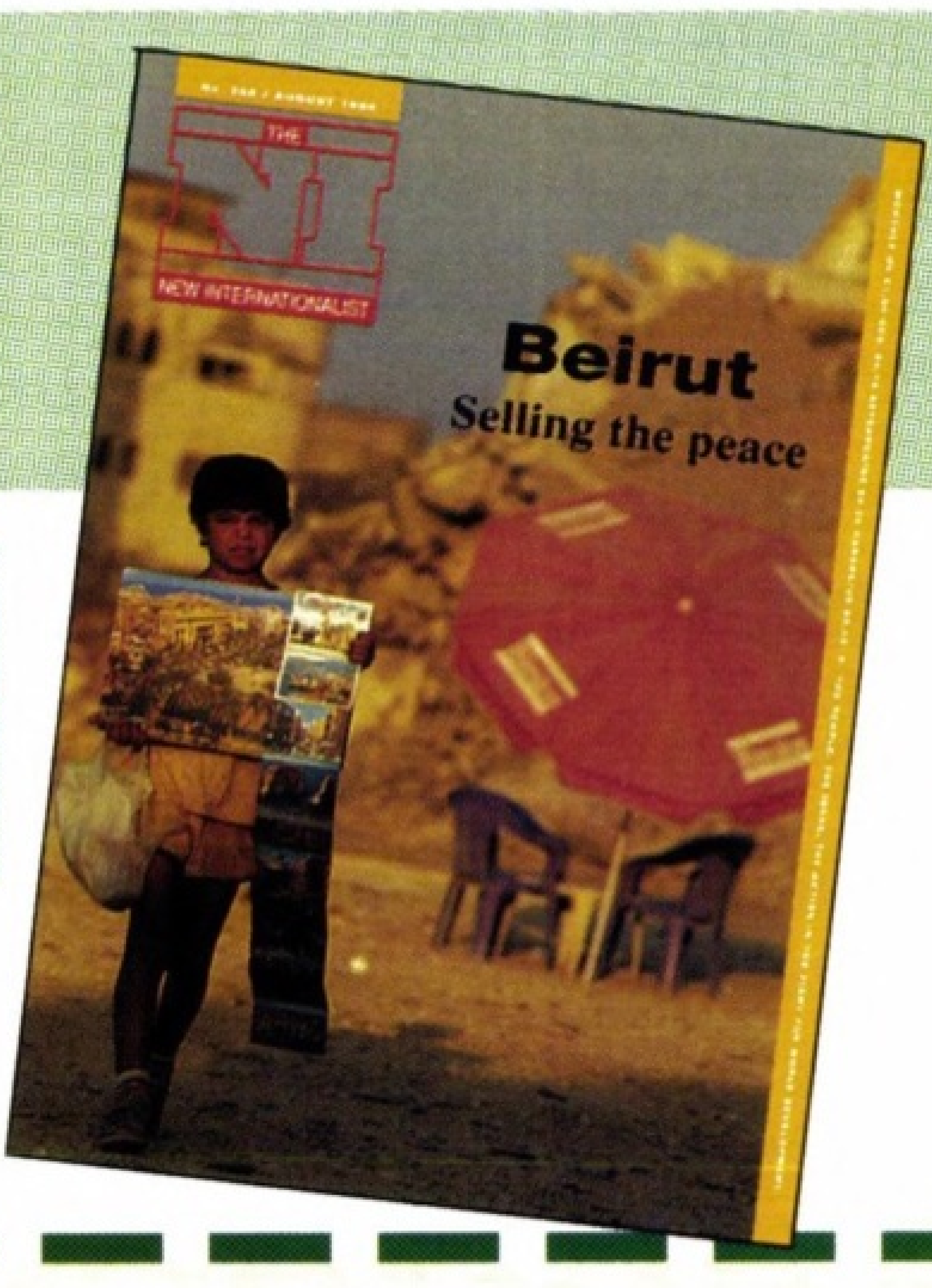

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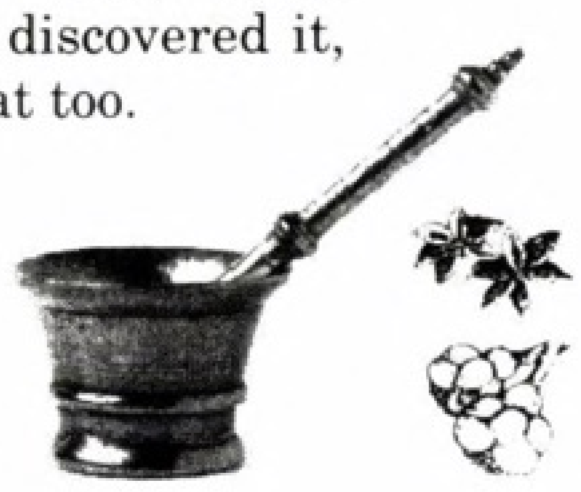

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